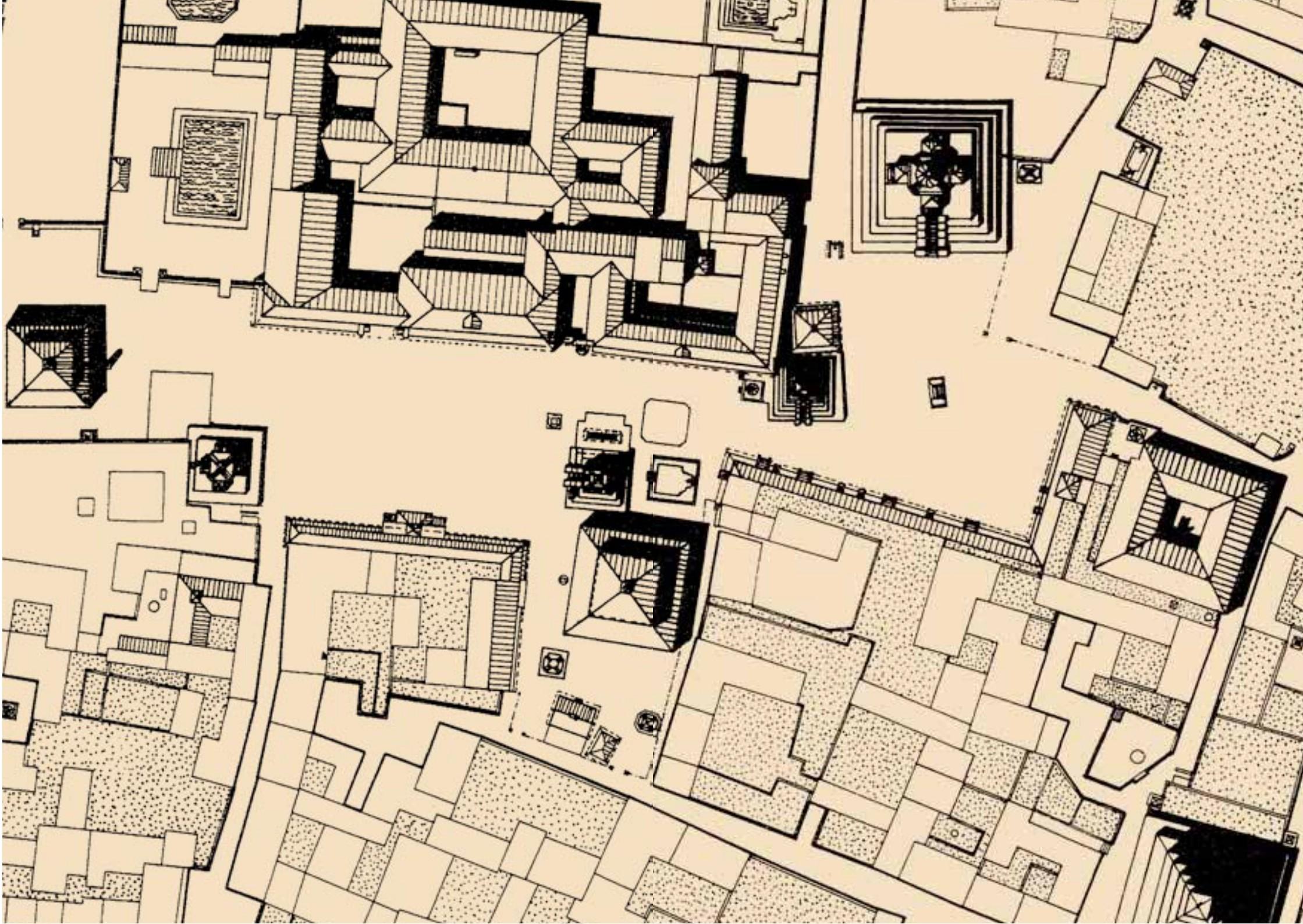


CULTURAL PORTAIT HANDBOOK 3



## Bhaktapur Durbar Square

### Authors

Melissa Jenkins  
Elke Selter  
Vibhushan Subba

### Text Editors

Melissa Jenkins  
Elke Selter

### Photography

Elke Selter  
Melissa Jenkins

### Layout Designer

Manohar Rai

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For more information please contact:  
UNESCO Kathmandu  
P.O. Box 14391, Jawalakhel, Lalitpur  
Kathmandu, Nepal

Email: kathmandu@unesco.org

Tel: +977-1-5554-396/769  
Fax: +977-1-5554-450

[www.unesco.org/kathmandu](http://www.unesco.org/kathmandu)

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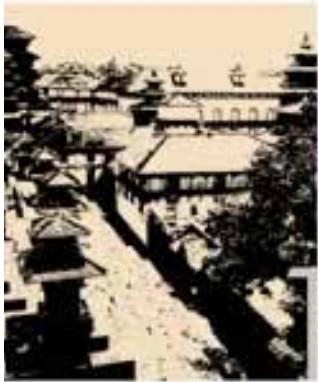


National Federation of  
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HANUMAN DHOKA DURBAR SQUARE



PATAN DURBAR SQUARE



BHAKTAPUR DURBAR SQUARE

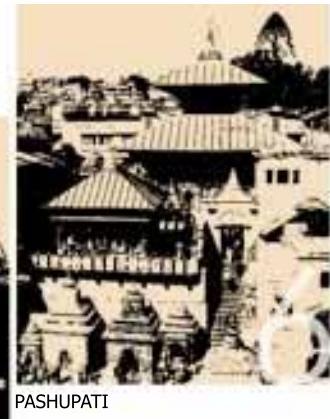


BAUDDHANATH



SWAYAMBHU

5



PASHUPATI



CHANGU NARAYAN

## CULTURAL PORTRAIT HANDBOOKS

**H**eritage and culture can be discovered and enjoyed throughout the Kathmandu Valley. Seven monument zones in particular were recognised to be of outstanding universal value by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and have therefore been added to the List of World Heritage Sites (WHL).

The WHL includes cultural and natural heritage sites from all over the world, and the World Heritage Convention provides a legal tool for their protection. Of the 812 World Heritage Sites, four are located in Nepal, namely the Kathmandu Valley, Sagarmatha National Park, Royal Chitwan National Park and Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha.

The diverse monument zones of the Kathmandu Valley embody the uniquely intricate and yet refined Newari urban buildings and an incredible mix of Hindu and Buddhist culture. The Valley provides an example of mixed architectural styles and exquisite craftsmanship. Its very composition makes it one of the most complex World Heritage Sites on the WHL: not only does it

include the historic centers of the Valley's three main cities; it also encompasses remarkable living Hindu and Buddhist monuments.

The site was listed as a World Heritage Site in 1979 as bearing a unique testimony to a cultural tradition which is living (criteria iii) and is an outstanding example of a group of buildings that illustrate a significant stage in human history (criteria iv). The Valley is also the context for many living traditions and events, with artistic works of outstanding universal value (criteria vi).

This booklet is one of seven that were prepared as part of a wider awareness raising campaign aimed at focusing both local and international attention on the need to preserve the Kathmandu Valley WHS. Generous funding from the National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan (NFUAJ) has enabled the UNESCO Office in Kathmandu to prepare these publications highlighting the gems of the Valley and their rich mythological and historical background.



# KATHMANDU VALLEY: History and Architecture overview

by Kai Weise

## EARLY HISTORY

The Swayambhu Purana relates the myth of the creation of the Kathmandu Valley to the existence of a great lake, the Taodhanahrada. It has been geologically verified that a lake did exist in the Valley during the Pleistocene era.

The Kiratas, mentioned in Hindu religious books such as the Mahabarata, are believed to have ruled the Valley as far back as the 7th century BC. The mention of non-Sanskrit names in Licchavi inscriptions indicates that the Valley was at that time ruled by an ethnic group that spoke a Tibeto-Burman or possibly ‘proto-Newari’ language. The Kiratas probably had their capital in Gokarna and founded the holy site at Gokameshvara. The four stupas in the cardinal directions around Patan, known as the Ashoka stupas, are considered to date back to this period.

## LICCHAVI PERIOD

c. 200 TO c. 750 AD

The origin of the Licchavi rulers is not exactly known. They may have broken away from the northern Indian branch during the first half of the 3rd century, or even earlier; however it is also possible that local rulers in the Kathmandu Valley adopted this name. The arts and politics of the Licchavis were influenced by the highly developed Gupta culture in India, which is why this period is often referred to as the "Classical Era" of Kathmandu. During this period, trade links between India and Tibet grew, bringing with it prosperity and religious tolerance.

The earliest inscription in the Valley, found at Changu Narayan in 464 AD, dates back to this period. The Licchavi kings founded

some of the Valley's most venerable shrines, including the Vaishnavite temple of Changu Narayan, the Shivaite temple of Pashupati and the Buddhist stupa of Swayambhu. Other than chaityas and primitive shelters housing lingas, a number of fine quality sculptures from the Licchavi period have remained preserved in situ in the Valley. No larger buildings survive from the Licchavi period, mainly because, although most of the holy sites were already established by the 8th century, these buildings were generally reconstructed and embellished during the Malla period.

## THAKURI PERIOD

c. 750 TO 1200 AD

Little evidence is remaining of the period between the Licchavis and the Mallas, which is referred to as the "Post-Lichhavi Period (C. 879 – 1200)" or even the "Dark Ages". In 879 AD, the "Nepal Samvat", a new era, began. At that time a large number of migrants, fleeing from the Muslim invasion in northern India, came to the Valley, which was controlled by powerful nobles known as the Thakuris. Close links were kept with the Pala dynasty in Bengal.

At this time Vajrayana Buddhism and Tantrism became widespread in the Valley. In the 10th century, King Gunakamadeva is attributed to have founded

Kathmandu in the form of Manjushri's sword. Kasthamandapa in Kathmandu, Kwa Baha in Lalitpur and the Tripura Palace in Bhaktapur were also founded. From the 11th century onwards manuscripts emerged from the viharas and bahas, though the quality of stone sculpture deteriorated.

Even though the Valley must have been strewn with settlements, viharas and bahas by the 12th century, only a few buildings from this period remain.

One of the oldest existing buildings in the Valley is the Kasthamandapa, in Kathmandu Durbar Square,



which was probably founded in the first half of the 12th century. However, renovations and added embellishments have given the building a very “Malla Style” appearance.

#### **EARLY MALLA PERIOD 1200 TO 1382 AD**

The early Malla period is poorly documented, and very few structures remain. This can be attributed to the regular raiding, looting and sacking of the Valley by neighbouring kingdoms during the late 13th to the mid 14th centuries.

The first Malla ruler, Ari Malla, reigned from 1200 to 1216. However it is not known how he overcame the Licchavi and Thakuri rulers. The suggestion has been

made that these Mallas were descendants of an ancient lineage mentioned in the Buddhist and Hindu scriptures; however the more likely version would be that the new kings adopted the name, which in Sanskrit means “wrestler” or “victor”.

#### **LATE MALLA PERIOD**

##### **1382 TO 1768 AD**

It was only after 1382, when Sthiti Malla usurped power that some stability came to the Valley. Between 1484 and 1619, the three separate Malla city-states of Kathmandu, Lalitpur (Patan) and Bhaktapur

emerged. These three states were constantly feuding, until they were finally conquered by Pritivi Narayan Shah in the mid 18th century.

This period is often described as the ‘Golden Age’ for art, architecture and craftwork in the Valley. The Mallas developed the craft of constructing with bricks

and wood to perfection. The buildings, whether temples, palaces or dwellings, are adapted to the climate, as well as having aesthetic finesse.

Competition between the three kingdoms resulted in the creation of the magnificent Durbar Squares, with the palaces and array of temples and shrines. The Malla kings became greatly influenced by Brahmin scholars and gave increasing importance to Hindu deities such as Pashupati and Taleju. Consequently, the responsibility of tending to the major Buddhist shrines was taken over by the Tibetan immigrants.

#### **EARLY SHAH PERIOD**

##### **1768 TO 1846 AD**

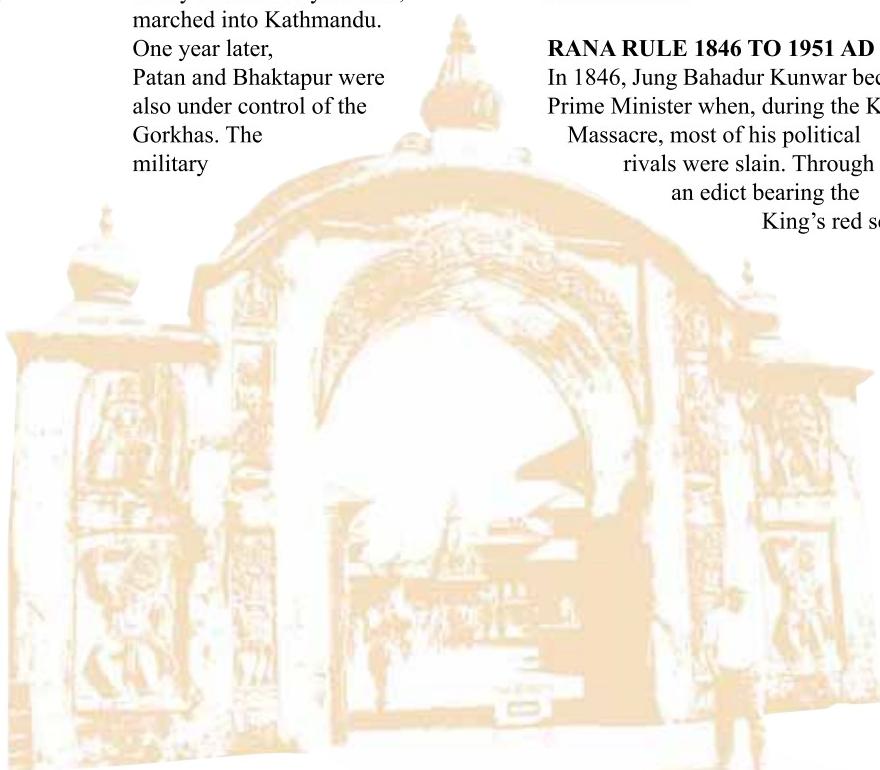
During the Indra Jatra festival in September 1768, the Gorkhali forces, led by Pritivi Narayan Shah, marched into Kathmandu. One year later, Patan and Bhaktapur were also under control of the Gorkhas. The military

campaign had started as early as 1685 and continued till the signing of the Treaty of Sugauli in 1816. With the signing of this treaty, the present boundaries of the Kingdom of Nepal, with its capital in Kathmandu were defined and the Shah dynasty was installed as the rulers of the new kingdom.

After conquering the Valley, the Shahs adopted the “Malla style”, even propagating it. However, a Mogul influence can be observed in certain buildings such as the extensions made to the Palace in Kathmandu, the Dharara tower and the old Bag Durbar built by Bhimsen Thapa. Even the “Malla style” private buildings underwent some change and adjustments with time, though a complete new style was not developed, nor introduced.

##### **RANA RULE 1846 TO 1951 AD**

In 1846, Jung Bahadur Kunwar became Prime Minister when, during the Kot Massacre, most of his political rivals were slain. Through an edict bearing the King's red seal,



all sovereign powers were wrested from the King. The position of Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief and the title of Maharaj of Kaski and Lamjung became hereditary, the line of succession being reserved for the next oldest member of the Rana family.

In 1850, Jung Bahadur visited Europe, bringing back a taste for 19th-century European fashion. In contrast the period of Rana Rule is defined by the conscious isolation of the country from outside influence. This was clearly politically motivated, to consolidate their position within the country and to minimize interference from the neighbouring countries.

Inspired by Neo-classical Europe and the British colonial architecture in neighbouring India, the Ranas built white stucco palaces. With time, the dwellings took on their own ‘Rana’ style, either by copying decorative elements or reproducing miniature palaces.

The severe earthquake of 1934 recorded a magnitude 8.4 on the Richter scale and caused widespread devastation in the Valley. Several thousand people were killed and the majority of buildings were destroyed or damaged beyond repair. The post-disaster reconstruction effort was pursued in typical ‘Rana’ style, as can still be seen in the environs of New Road, Kathmandu.

##### **CONTEMPORARY PERIOD 1951 TO PRESENT**

King Tribhuvan regained his hereditary power from the Rana regime with the help of intellectuals in exile in

India, the opposition faction of the Ranas and the newly formed Indian government under Nehru. 1951 saw Nepal open its borders to the world, which allowed foreign aid to help develop infrastructure, and improve health and education. After a decade of experimenting with parliamentary democracy, King Mahendra dissolved the parliament on 15 December 1960. The party-less ‘panchayat’ system was introduced in 1962, which ended with the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990.

The stability of multi-party democracy was undermined after the massacre of a large part of the Royal Family on 1 June 2001 and the Maoist insurgency left the country in turmoil, leading to the dissolution of parliament. On 1 February 2005 King Gyanendra assumed absolute control of the country. The people of Nepal, however, felt differently and initiated the Janadolan II (democracy) movement in April 2006 which resulted in the reinstatement of parliament and the review of the constitution.

During the last half of the 20th century, Reinforced Cement Concrete brought about new possibilities, mainly constructing tall slender buildings. The trend of hereditary vertical division of properties has created smaller plots, and buildings tend to have 5-6 floors in stead of 3. Recently a new trend of pseudo-newari style buildings is emerging, instigated by building bylaws conceived to preserve the monument zones.



## CITY OF DEVOTEES

The chillies have been brought into the sun and children have appeared from the inner courtyards of the ancient houses. The streets of Bhaktapur have come to life after a night of sleep. Bhaktapur, the 'City of Devotees' is also called Bhadgaon, the rice village or Khowpa in Newari. It was established in the 9th century. Bhaktapur served as the capital of the Malla Kingdom until the late 18th century, when Prithvi Narayan Shah conquered the valley, unified Nepal and established his capital in Kathmandu. Located some 12 km west of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur is the smallest of the three main cities in the Valley, with the least development pressure. This has allowed the settlement to retain a primarily homogenous population of Newars and much of its original identity.



The city of Bhaktapur is divided into two centres, the lower town around the Durbar and Taumadhi Squares and the upper town around Dattatreya Square. A network of streets connects the Taumadhi and Dattatreya squares. The alleys that lead to the Dattatreya square are filled with thangka (religious scroll paintings) schools, music shops, and stalls selling Bhaktapur's famous curd.

Bhaktapur is often referred to as the best preserved of the Valley's three towns, and indeed, it still shows a great deal of traditional Newari character. The streets which were once filled with organic waste, pigs and chickens, are now models of traditional brick pavement and renewed sewage systems and the pigs have disappeared, together

#### JuJu Dhaao: The King of Yoghurts

The city of Bhaktapur is renowned for its **JuJu Dhaao** or Bhaktapur ko Daha (curd from Bhaktapur). Traditionally the buffalo milk used to produce this delicacy was sourced from a hamlet outside Bhaktapur called Kharipati. The milk is boiled and poured into distinctive shallow earthen dishes or katauras. The significant difference between this and other buffalo milk curd is that the katauras are then half buried under straw, covered with wood and paper and locked in a room for up to four hours. The sweetened yoghurt is then sold in small earthen pots and eaten with relish off wooden sticks. A visit to Bhaktapur is not complete without trying a bowl of Juju Dhaao.



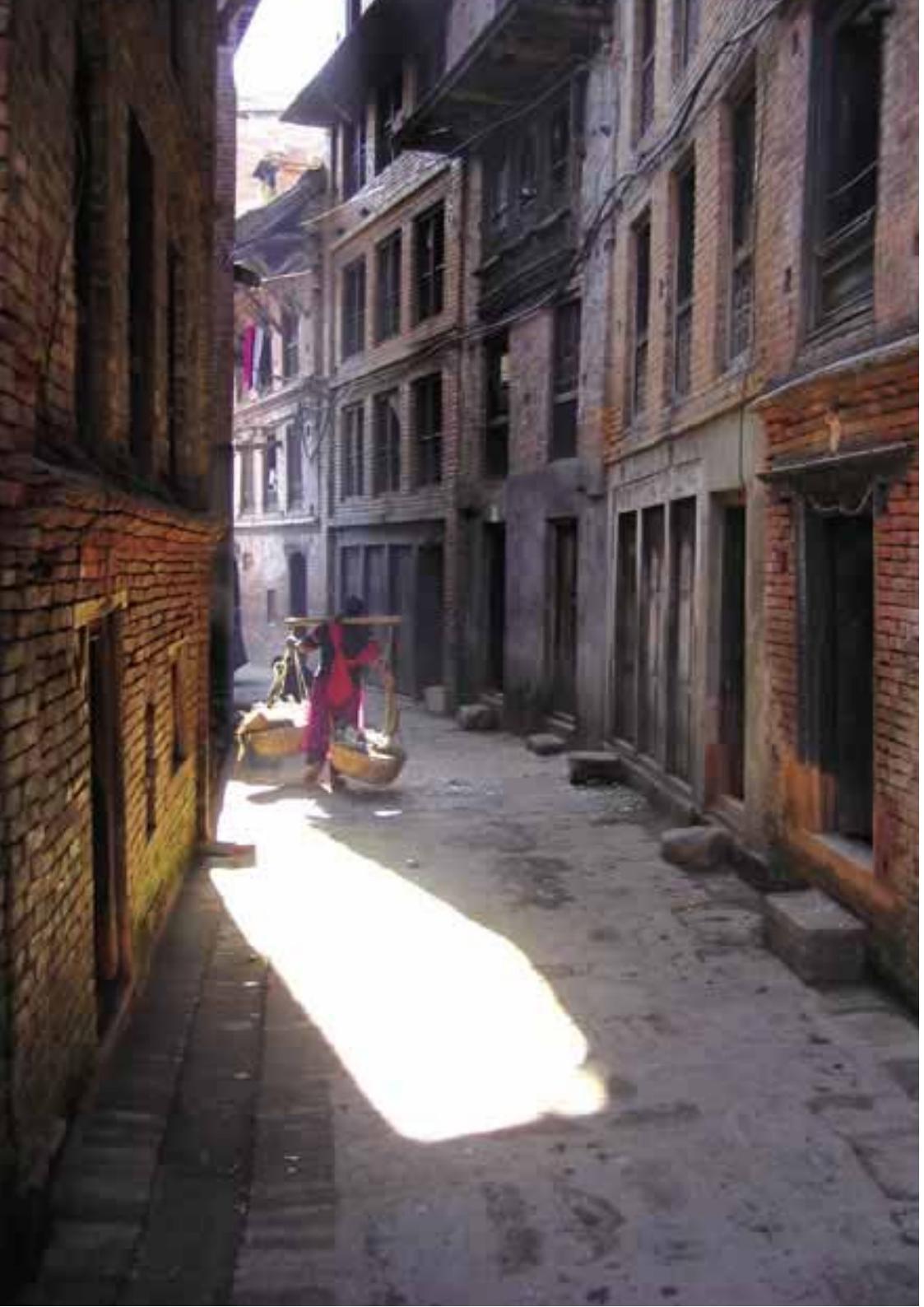


with their ‘food supply’. Meanwhile, a major effort has been made to improve sanitation and living conditions in the old town.

Bhaktapur, which is kept largely free from traffic, now provides a good opportunity to experience a traditional Newari settlement. Besides the three main squares (Durbar, Taumadhi and Dattatreya), the town consists of a series of smaller squares or neighbourhoods (locally known as ‘Tole’). Traditionally, communities were organized around a Tole, which defined your caste, social class and profession. Each Tole also has its own

deity. Even today, this system is still in place and throughout the Newari settlements, you can see the distinct woodcarvers’ neighbourhood, the area of the goldsmiths, or that of the potters.

Today, there are still many small alleys that have withstood tourism pressures and which provide a pleasant walk through traditional residential neighbourhoods. The inhabitants of Bhaktapur still conduct much of their daily life in these squares and alleys and every day activities can be seen throughout the town.

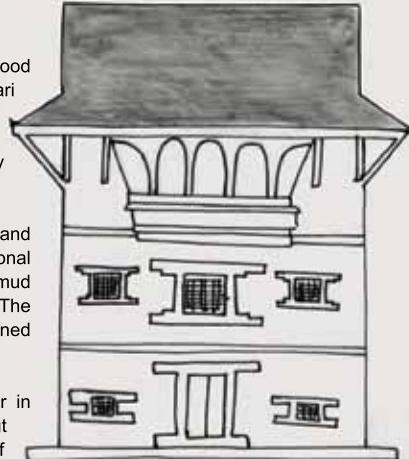


## The Newari House

The old town of Bhaktapur provides a good opportunity to see typical traditional Newari houses. The lifestyle of the Newars has changed little over time and the style and lay-out of the houses has remained largely unchanged over centuries.

The houses are built of brick and timber and their sloping roofs are covered with traditional tiles called jinghati. The floors are made of mud and mud is also used to cover interior walls. The windows are beautifully carved and screened with lattice work rather than glass.

Traditionally, extended families live together in one house. Ideally the property is laid out around a courtyard or chowk for reasons of privacy as well as security. In reality, however, most chowks are made up of different smaller housing units, with at least one house providing access to the street through a small gateway. Due to the lack of private gardens and facilities inside the houses, these courtyards have become a vital part of the housing unit. They are used as a playground for the children, for washing and doing laundry, for drying grains and seeds, for housing small livestock and for enjoying the sun.



The facades of the traditional houses are symmetric in composition. For the facade design, uneven numbers are preferred: three floors, each including three or five openings (windows or doors). The central window on the upper floor is generally more elaborate than the others. This is the main window of the living room and is called **San Jhyal**. It has a bench built in to it, which is used as the main sitting area in the living room and provides the inhabitants with a good view of the life in the streets below.

The ground floor of the houses is either used for commercial purposes or as a storage room. In case of commercial activities, a large part of the lower facade is replaced by an arcade-like structure. Otherwise, the lower level of the facade remains quite simple with only a low door. Originally the ground floor was never used as a living area, as it is often damp and dark.



San Jhyal



Living areas are found on the first and second floor as well as in the attic. The first floor houses the bedrooms and the second floor functions as the main living room. This is the floor where guests are received and where most time is spent. The kitchen and house altar are housed in the attic.

In contrast to many other cultures, the Newars do not have a significant furniture making tradition. The main elements inside the house were a clay stove and straw mats or **sukul**. The sukul are used for sitting as well as for sleeping and can be considered the main multi-purpose piece of furniture in a traditional house. Household supplies, such as rice and grain, are kept in wooden chests or large clay pots, which are stored in the kitchen. Most families also had a set of copper or brass plates and glasses.

There is no water supply in the houses, so there are no bathrooms or toilets. Washing is done at public hiti (waterspouts) and because of the lack of latrines, public toilets or simply open spaces are used. Water for cooking and washing purposes is often brought into the courtyard in large copper vessels. Even today, most traditional houses are not connected to the mains water supply.

Influences from the West and the demand for improved living standards have resulted in many traditional houses being demolished. Other than the lack of water supply and basic sanitary infrastructure, there is also a problem of the very low floor height (generally only up to 1.7 or 1.8 meters). Traditional interiors are also dark because of the small latticed windows and the mud floors make them very dusty.

Over recent years, however, several private house owners have managed to sensitively restore their family houses and to turn them into beautiful and comfortable residences or guesthouses.

# NAMUNA GHAR (MODEL HOUSE)

The Namuna Ghar, close to Dattatreya Square is an example of a traditional restored house.

The owner wanted to set an example for others, to show them how it was possible to maintain an ancient building and restore it using modern amenities without destroying its ancient appearance and values. He, therefore, called it "Namuna Ghar" or "Model House".

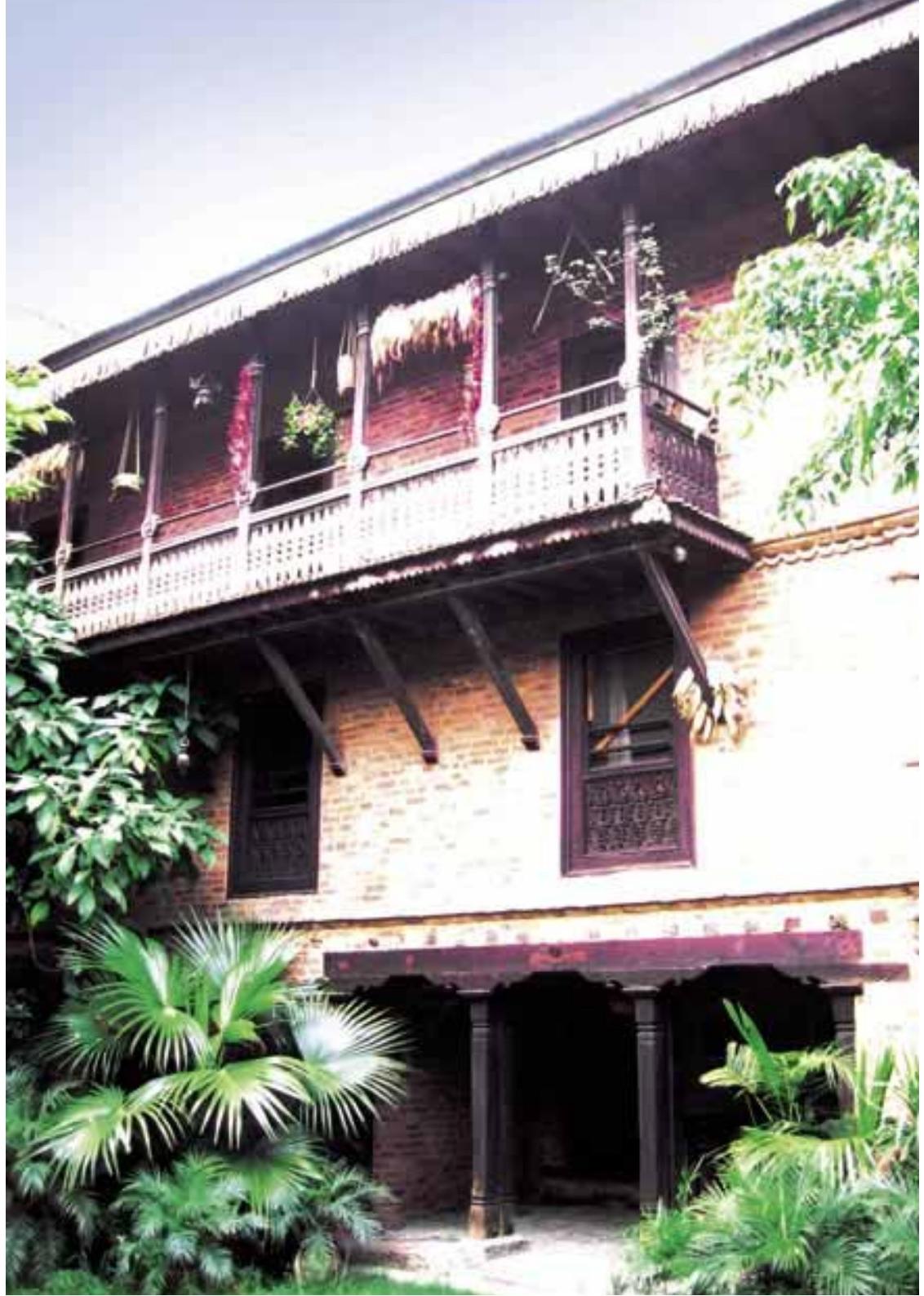
It is a typical Newari house, about 150 years old, which was owned by farmers. It was totally neglected and in a very bad state. Nobody had lived in the house for over a decade and there were rumors that it was haunted. Before it was restored, it had been used as a chicken farm.

The house has been restored without changing its original shape. Most of the materials have been re-used and only a few elements had to be added. "It is difficult to make but easy to break", is an adage that applies to all the wooden frames, windows and bricks during the demolition phase of the restoration.

However, the workmen were trained to be very cautious and as far as possible, materials were reused. Materials for modern facilities such as the bathrooms are entirely new, but local craftsmen and traditional techniques were employed throughout.

The owner's main purpose was to attract people's attention and encourage them to restore their own properties. This explains why a great deal of effort was put into the installation of modern amenities such as a comfortable bathroom, a modern kitchen and a roof-top terrace.

True to its name the Namuna Ghar serves as a Model House to all those who visit. It has set a precedent for many others and encouraged them to take the step towards restoration. As such, it was granted a UNESCO Heritage Award in 2004. The award recognizes the high quality of the restoration work as well as its model and trend-setting function within the historic settlements of the Kathmandu Valley.





# BHAKTAPUR DURBAR SQUARE

The Durbar Squares are the historic cores of the three major towns within the Kathmandu Valley. Durbar means 'royal' and the squares developed around the former royal palaces and a series of important temples and shrines, linked together by an open public space. They were, and still are, the center of public life in the cities.

The Durbar Square of Bhaktapur is smaller than those of Patan and Kathmandu. Its monuments also suffered great damage during the 1934 earthquake and today's Durbar Square is only a vague image of what it once used to be.

When entering the Bhaktapur Durbar Square from the main gate, there is a group of temples on the right (south) collectively known as the Char (four) Dham.





National Art Gallery

The four temples are the Jagannath, Kedarnath, Badrinath and Krishna temples and lie just inside the main gateway that marks the entrance to the Bhaktapur Durbar Square.

The most attractive of these is the two-tiered **Krishna Mandir**. The temple dates back to 1757 and is dedicated to Krishna, the playful cowherd form of Vishnu. It has nicely carved wooden decorations and its struts depict scenes related to all ten incarnations of Vishnu. A stone Garuda statue, Vishnu's mount, sits in front of the temple.

The north (left) of the Durbar Square is lined with the **palace complex**. The complex was built and embellished by Bhaktapur's successive kings, until the unification of Nepal in the late 18th century. This complex is said to have been founded in the early 15th century by king Yaksha Malla. The largest part of the current buildings, however,

dates back to the 16th and 17th centuries and was the work of Malla king Bhupatindra. Of the supposed 99 courtyards, only six remain and the palace is lacking in scale compared to those of Kathmandu and Patan. This is possibly due to the decreasing political significance of Bhaktapur during this period and the destruction caused by the earthquake of 1934.

The first part of the building is reached through a small gate and is now occupied by the Heritage Unit of the municipality. The small interior courtyard houses an attractive pond.

Next is the Malati Chowk, which has been converted into the **National Art Gallery**.

Further east and directly opposite the pillar supporting the statue of king Bhupatindra Malla, is the renowned **Golden Gate** or the Sun Dhoka (Lun Dhavaka in Newari).

#### National Art Gallery

The **Malati Chowk** was built by Bhupatindra Malla in 1707. This section of the palace has been converted into the **National Art Gallery** which contains numerous paintings, manuscripts and stone sculptures. It was established by the Government of Nepal's Department of Archaeology in 1960. The collection consists of some of the rarest paintings of Nepal and a wide array of manuscripts with painted covers and illustrations. Although the majority of items are paintings dating from the Malla period, the Gallery also contains bronze, brass, stone and wooden images.

The ground floor of the building exhibits various stone pieces, including representative stone inscriptions dating from the Licchavi period and some remarkable sculptures. The majority are from the Bhaktapur and include a beautiful four-faced Shiva lingam. The first floor contains various painted works including some remarkable Thangkas (religious scroll paintings). The five showcases in the middle of the main hall display a number of exquisite manuscripts and covers. Among them, the most notable is the pilgrimage tour of King Pratap Malla. The corridors are lined with watercolour paintings of the aquatic world, mythical dragons, and various beasts and they are a good representation of medieval folk art of Nepal.



This magnificent gilt gateway was built by King Jaya Ranjit Malla in 1754 and is an exemplary piece of architectural repoussé work. The remarkable craftsmanship is considered by many to be the finest example of metalwork in Nepal.

The torana (panel above the door) features the image of a three-headed Taleju with numerous arms and two attendants at her side. Above these figures is a frame decorated with Garuda, serpents, dragons and reptiles. Set into either side of the gate are stone inscriptions, and on the curved gilded roof are numerous finials, including some shaped like elephants and winged lions.

The Golden Gate leads into the **Sadashiv Bhairav Chowk** of the Bhaktapur Palace. This is one of the only remaining courtyards, which is easily accessible for visitors. Passing through the Golden Gate, the next gate house is home to two huge drums covered with elephant skin.

The Sadashiv Bhairav Chowk leads to the **Naga Pokhari** (a pokhari is a brick lined reservoir or pond) or Naga Phuku in Newari, and to the Mul Chowk and **Taleju Temple**. Two guardian figures stand inside the doorway. The Naga Pokhari has a wooden post protruding from the centre supporting the head of Vasuki (a Nagaraja or Snake-King) and was founded by king Jagajyotir Malla



Golden Gate

in the early 17th century. The uneven patches around the dhara (traditional stone water-tap) absorb various sound frequencies and prevent echoes, which allowed the king to listen to musical performances in the area without distortion.

A few paces away from the pond is the entrance to the **Mul Chowk** courtyard, which houses the **Taleju Temple** and is only accessible to Hindus. It is believed that Taleju, the tutelary deity of the Mallas, was brought from Simraongarh by Harisingh Deva. When the Muslims invaded his kingdom, he fled to Nepal and settled in Bhaktapur.

#### Sacred Water Sources

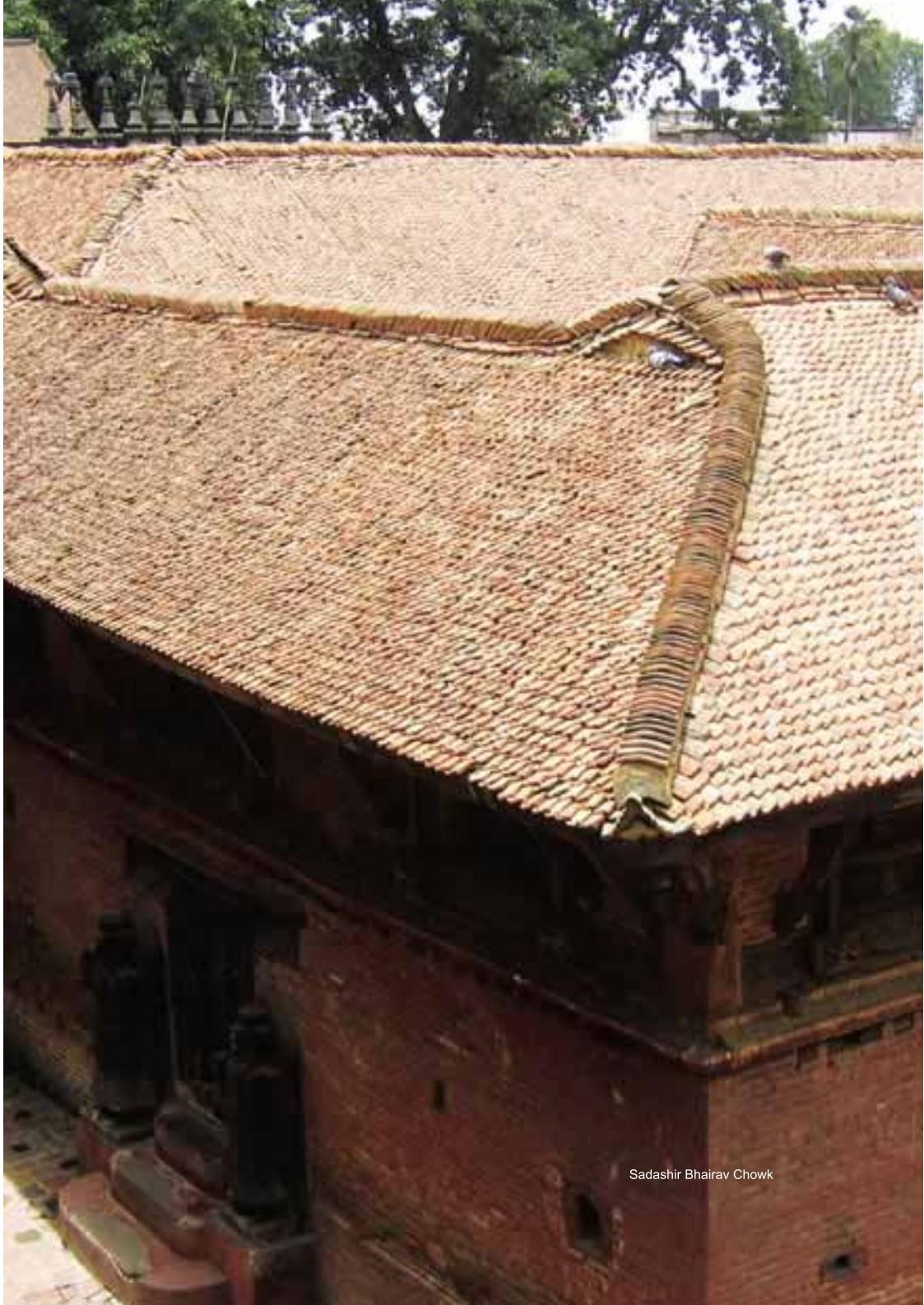
Ponds and water pipes were commissioned by various rulers of Nepal for both public and private use. They are fed by intricate stone waterways through which water flows from underground sources. The structures related to the storage, distribution and access to water are distinctive elements of the cultural landscape of the Kathmandu Valley.

Water is a sacred symbol: kalash, or vessels full of water, are traditionally placed either side of a Newari door to bestow blessings upon the inhabitants. The public wells, fountains and ponds that store water are all considered sacred. Providing access to water is highly commendable. Over the years the altruism of royalty and common people alike has left no corner of the valley without a water source.

Unfortunately, with the advent of modern plumbing and changes in land use, many traditional water sources are falling into disrepair. Many require immediate conservation in order to protect not only their utilitarian benefit, but also the architectural, cultural and historical significance of such structures.



Naga Pokhari



Sadashir Bhairav Chowk

Some people believe that the kingdom was handed over to Harisingh Deva by the rulers because they feared the wrath of the Taleju Devi that he had brought with him. However, others believe that the rulers of Bhaktapur fled at the arrival of Harisingh, thinking they were being invaded. Many years later when the Muslims abandoned Simraongarh, Harisingh returned to his kingdom but left the Taleju Bhawani behind as a gift.

The security guard who watches over the entrance to the Mul Chowk believes that a fierce battle took place in the courtyard when Prithvi Narayan Shah conquered Bhaktapur. When some visitors questioned his story, he produced evidence by pointing out a bullet hole in the leg of the guardian statue standing before the Taleju Temple. The Mul Chowk was established in the 14th century and is the oldest part of the palace.

Just next to the Golden Gate stands the **Palace of Fifty-Five Windows**. This palace, which is being completely renovated by the Department of Archaeology and the Bhaktapur municipality, is one of the main parts of the palace complex.

Though there was a palace on this site as long ago as 1427, it was remodelled by king Jitamitra and his son Bhupatindra Malla in the late 17th century.

As its name suggests, the palace was constructed with 55 carved windows. The carved windows of the second floor are considered the finest examples of woodcarving produced during the

reign of the prodigious king. Above each of the windows are wooden toranas depicting gods, goddesses, and mythological beasts. Behind the ornate facade is the palace's royal audience hall.

The palace was, however, heavily damaged in the 1934 earthquake. The final reconstruction, which happened immediately afterwards, did not exactly follow the original and only 53 windows are in place today. The palace houses some beautiful wall paintings on the first floor, which are currently being restored. These paintings depict different stories from the Hindu-epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. The central figure of the paintings is Vishnu.

In front of the Golden Gate stands the **Pillar of Bhupatindra Malla**. The king is depicted sitting on a lotus capital, legs folded, with a serpent supporting the capital. A small bird sits on top of the serpent's head. Bhupatindra is the most famous of the Malla Kings of Bhaktapur and during his reign, he invested heavily in art in architecture.

Huge **Taleju bells** are found in all the three Durbar Squares of the Kathmandu Valley. They had multiple uses in ancient times when they acted as alarm bells during times of distress, as a means to notify the population of important events or discussions and to pay homage to the fearsome Goddess Taleju. The Bhaktapur Taleju Bell was erected in 1737.

Next to the Taleju Bell is the **Batsala Devi Temple**. This Shikhara style



Taleju Bell

temple is completely constructed in sandstone and is built upon a three stage plinth. It is dedicated to Batsala Devi, a form of the Goddess Durga. The temple was originally built by king Jitamitra Malla in 1696. The structure that can be seen today, however, is a reconstruction by Bhaktapur's king Bhupatindra Malla and dates back to the late 17th or early 18th century. The Batsala Devi Temple is similar in style and lay-out to the famous Krishna Temple on Patan Durbar Square, but smaller in scale.

There is a smaller bell on the lower plinth that is known as the “barking bell”. The king had the bell ring made to replicate the sound of the death knell that he had heard in a dream. It is said that every time the bell is rung, dogs start howling.

#### Shikhara Style

The Shikhara temples can easily be distinguished by the use of stone and their Indianized style. The temples are called Shikhara in reference to their tapering shape (Shikhara meaning mountain peak in Sanskrit).

Although the style developed in India in the 6th century, it only appeared in Nepal during the late Licchavi period, 9th century.

The main feature of a Shikhara temple is its tapering tower, which is often surrounded by similar but smaller towers, located on porches above the temples' entrances. Shikhara temples are generally built on a square or octagonal stepped plinth.

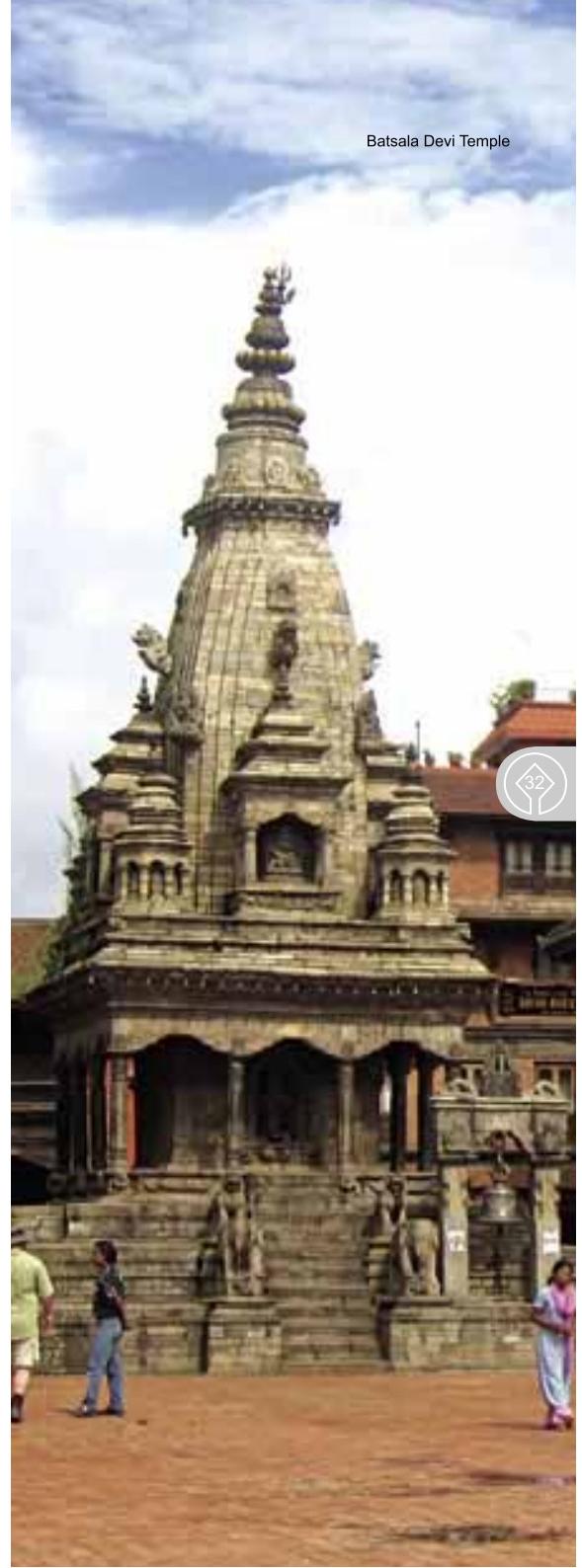
Behind the Batsala Devi Temple is a water source called the **Dhunga Dhara** and next to it stands the **Chyasalin Mandapa**. The mandapa was built during the 17th century by king Jitamitra Malla and was used as a resthouse by travelers and pilgrims. It has an open hall at the lower level.

The original building was destroyed in the earthquake of 1934. As part of the restoration campaign for Bhaktapur (see page 88), the Chyasalin Mandapa was reconstructed. The reconstruction was done based on iconographic documentation of the building before the earthquake and aimed to restore the overall appearance of the square. Modern materials such as concrete and steel were used for the reconstruction work and they have been kept visible in order not to disguise the fact that this is a new construction.

Beyond the Chyasalin mandapa is a very open section of the Durbar square, bordered by a large rest house building to the south and the east. This section of the square suffered huge losses during the 1934 earthquake and the lonely stone lions in the middle of the square are witness to that. They used to flank the entrance to one of the main temples dedicated to **Hari Shankar**.

The bizarre-looking **Fasidega Temple** is another odd remnant of post-earthquake initiatives. The six-stage plinth and stone sculptures guarding its steps are proof that these remains were once the base of a much larger structure. Today, the whitewashed dome structure is nothing more than a house for the deity, but it is clearly out of scale compared to the preserved temple-base.

Batsala Devi Temple



32

Chyasalin Mandapa



From the Batsala Devi Temple and Chyasalin Manadpa, one can walk further south, towards the **Pashupati Temple** and further on to Nyatapola Square.

The Pashupati Temple, also called the Yaksheshvar Temple, is today the most eye-catching on the Durbar Square. It is also the oldest surviving temple in the square, having been built by king

#### Rest houses

Public rest houses have been a part of Nepalese history since the Licchavi period. Dharanashala is the generic term for all types but they are also known as Sattal, Pati, Mandapa and Chapat. Sattals were built to give shelter to travelers and traders passing through the city. The importance of the world of commerce in the early development of the valley can be seen in the fact that each Durbar Square contains a temple to Bhimsen, the patron God of merchants. Traders from remote parts of Nepal would pay respects to and take refuge in the public rest houses on their way to Tibet.

Sattal, Pati, Mandapa and Chapat all vary in style, layout and height. **Pati** are the smallest and most widely distributed of the rest houses. As well as providing shelter for travelers, they are used as community meeting places. Pati consist of a raised, covered platform which is either free-standing, incorporated into a residential house or attached to an existing building like a lean-to and named Dupat (a two cornered Pati). **Sattal** were used by both transient travelers and by gurus and Sadhus for longer stays. The sattal of **Mandapa** type is square in form, single or several storied and serves many functions similar to those of a Pati, although it is designed primarily as a community reception hall. This type of Mandapa sattal is usually a free-standing open pavilion, which allows for large gatherings of people in and around it.



Taleju Bell

Batsala Devi Temple

Pashupati Temple

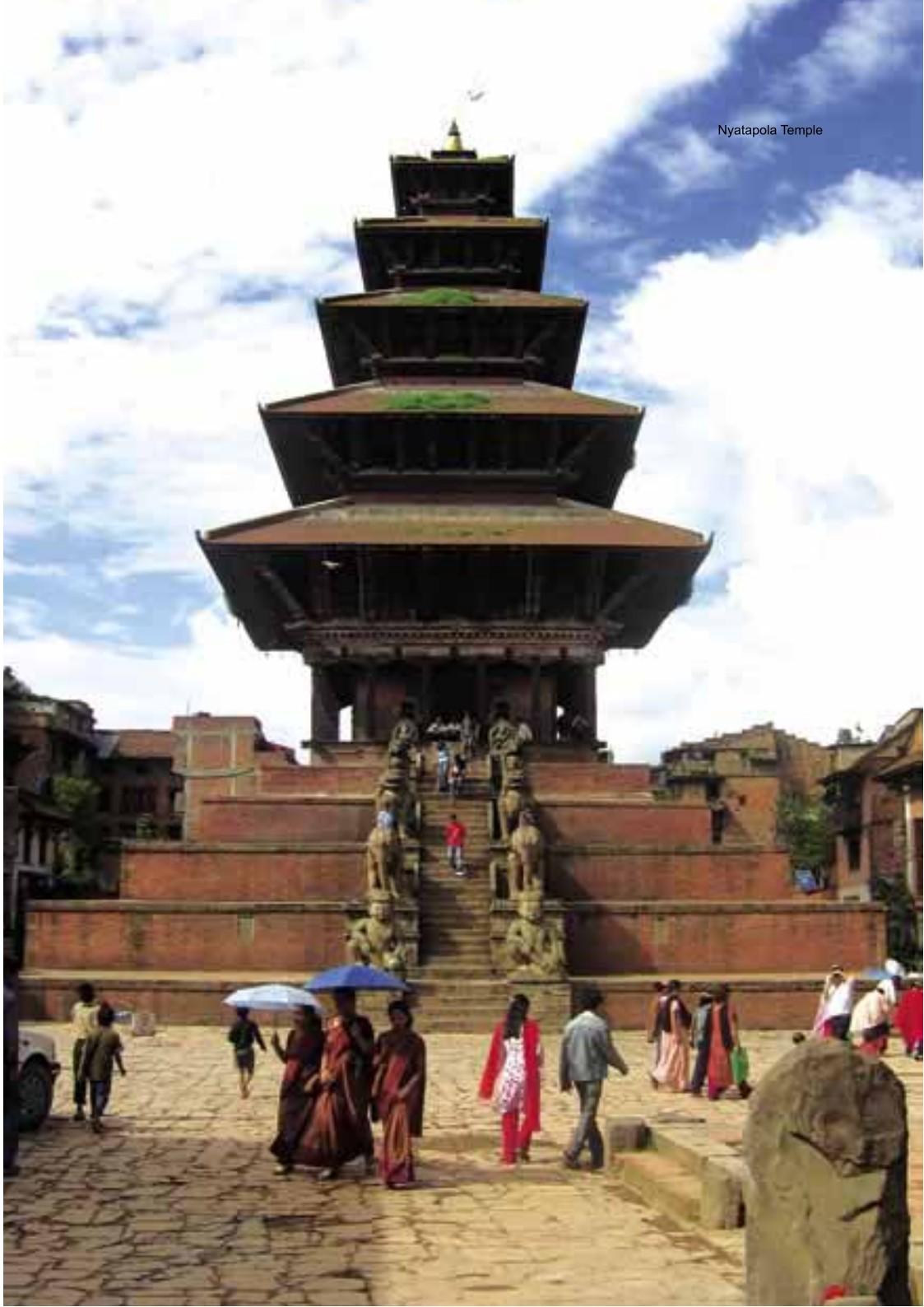


Yaksha Malla in the 1480's. Legend has it that Shiva in his form as Pashupati, protector of animals, appeared in the king's dream and told him to build a substitute for the original temple in Pashupati. The lay-out and style of the temple in Bhaktapur resembles the original. The central shrine also houses a large chaturmukha (four faced) lingam resembling the one located at Pashupati. The roof struts are carved with erotic scenes.

#### Erotic Carvings

Temples are considered sacred, divine, pure and holy. To have erotic scenes displayed across the struts could be considered as an act of desecration. It is not surprising then, that such decoration lies at the centre of numerous tales that attempt to explain the remarkable motifs. Some believe that the erotic scenes were carved to protect the temple from being struck by lightning. According to this school of thought, lightning is a virgin and the erotic carvings and bestial scenes help to drive her away as she views such subjects with utter disgust. Others propose that the presence of erotic sculpture points to the fact that for Hindus, life is meant for living in all its aspects, and that the carvers were merely depicting reality. The most commonly accepted explanation is that the scenes relate to the mysterious world of **Hindu** and **Vajrayanic tantric practices**. Tantra can be summarized as the Asian body of beliefs and practices which, working from the principle that the universe is purely the physical manifestation of divine energy, seeks to ritually channel that energy in creative ways. Common variations include visualizing the deity in the act of sexual union, visualizing oneself as the deity and acts such as the consumption of meat or alcohol. Occasionally, ritualized or 'non-standard' sex may be performed, which accounts for tantra's occasionally negative reputation in parts of the Western world.





Nyatapola Temple

## TAUMADHI SQUARE



Compared to the crowded narrow streets surrounding it, the Taumadhi or Nyatapola Square appears open and quiet. It is afternoon and most of the people have retreated into their houses to avoid the heat. A group of women has gathered at the hiti (waterspout). Wiping faces with the ends of their saris, they are cheerfully waiting their turn. A lady with a booming voice sits in the middle with women surrounding her and shares a story with the others. After regular intervals she says something funny

and elicits laughter all round. Today the daily chore has lost its monotony and has turned into a cheerful meeting. Above them, in a café, groups of tourists sit at the tables, sipping coffee, cameras aimed at the beautiful and dominating Nyatapola Temple. It is the tallest building in Bhaktapur, unique with its five roofs. The temple is built on a five stage plinth and a flight of steps flanked with guardian figures leads to the entrance. People believe that each pair of guardians is ten times more powerful than the pair below. At

the base of the stairs are the renowned wrestlers Jayamala and Phatta, who also feature in the Dattatreya Square (see page 51). The next stage is guarded by powerful elephants and above them is a pair of fierce stone lions. Above the lions are griffins and at the very top are the deities Singhini and Byahagri. There is a circumambulatory passage around the main entrance of the temple at the top of the steps and the roofs are supported with beautifully carved struts.

The temple was constructed in 1702 by King Bhupatindra Malla, a great builder who commissioned an impressive number of structures. Legend has it that when he built the Nyatapola Temple, which towered over all the others, the wrathful God Bhairav was offended. In his anger Bhairav told the King that if the majestic temple dedicated to a lesser God than he, he would destroy the entire city. The worried King sought the advice of his astrologers who instructed him to dedicate the temple to Bhairav's consort, Bhairavi. Bhupatindra himself led the labourers by carrying bricks for the construction. He did everything in his power to ensure that the temple would be completed as soon as possible and promptly dedicated it to Bhairavi. Bhairav was appeased and the destruction of the city was avoided.

Others believe that when the king extended the temple and beautified it, Bhairav was infuriated. The city was afflicted by drought and famine, and when the king apologised and begged for forgiveness, the deity requested he dedicate the temple to his consort, Bhairavi.





The identity of the goddess inside is a secret that has never been revealed. This has led to much speculation: some believe that she is the all powerful Siddhi Laxmi, others argue that it is Bhairavi. In order to avoid this controversy, the temple is called Nyatapola (five roofed), taking its name from the structure rather than the deity housed inside. From the religious point of view, this temple is not as important as others in the present context but people throng around it as a chosen resting place.

Today, a large group of school children are climbing the steep stairs, exchanging information about the temple, its history and occasionally passing their hands over the backs of the lions and the griffins as they continue to climb. Somewhere near the top, a man is awoken from

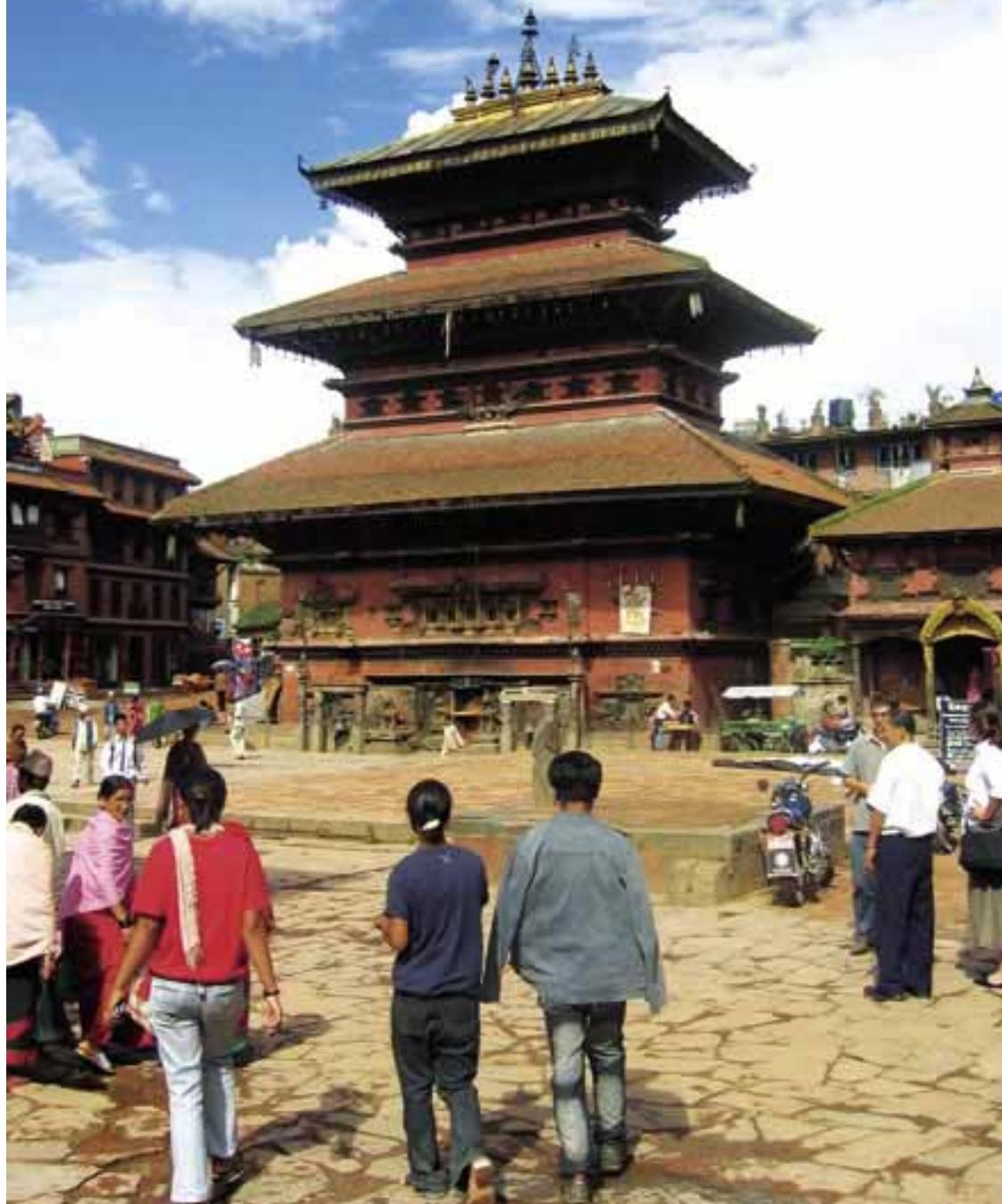
his dreams by the chattering voices. He looks at the children in mild disdain and turns away, returning once more to his dreams. In another

corner of the temple, two tourists are unpacking their lunch, immersed in conversation. All of a sudden the peace is shattered by violent shouts and there is confusion all around. It seems as if the wrathful deity Bhairav himself has come to life. The tourists have left their lunch packs, and are trying to get a grasp on the situation. An elderly man explains to them in broken English that it is a festival. The man has somehow managed to convey his message: the tourists are relieved and start laughing. This is the dance of the Nava Durga (9 female goddesses) and the dancers have appeared in the square wearing their vibrant costumes and masks and are chasing children.

Standing to the east of the Nyatapola temple is the Temple of Bhairav. It was built by King Jagajyotir Malla and was later restored by King Bhupatindra Malla who added two more storeys. The temple collapsed during the earthquake of 1934 and was later reconstructed. Legend has it that Bhairav came to Bhaktapur to watch the festival of Bisket (see page 78), disguised as a commoner. A clever Tantric saw through his disguise and bound Bhairav with powerful spells. Seeing that he was trapped and there was no chance of getting away he started sinking into the earth. Before he could escape the quick-witted Tantric decapitated the God and installed his head in a temple. This is how Bhairav remained in Bhaktapur.

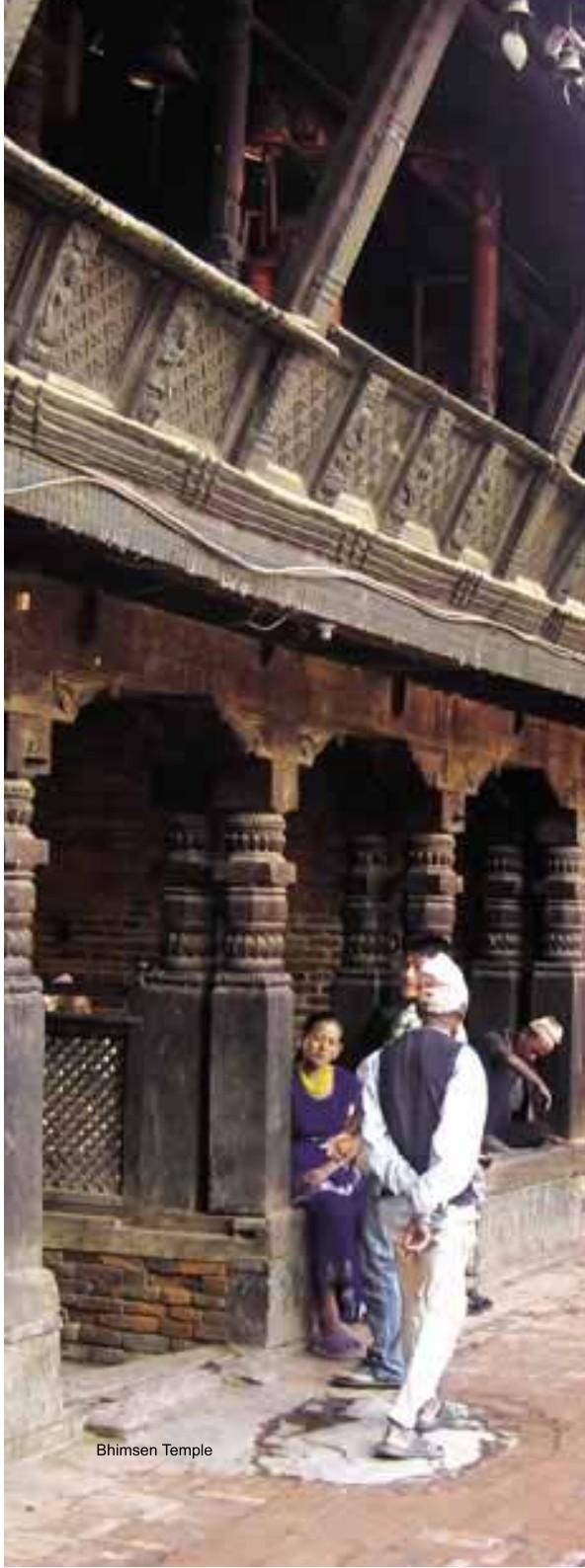
From Taumadhi Square one can follow the old trade route along which Bhaktapur was formed and which leads to the upper town.

Bhairav Temple



Route between lower & upper town

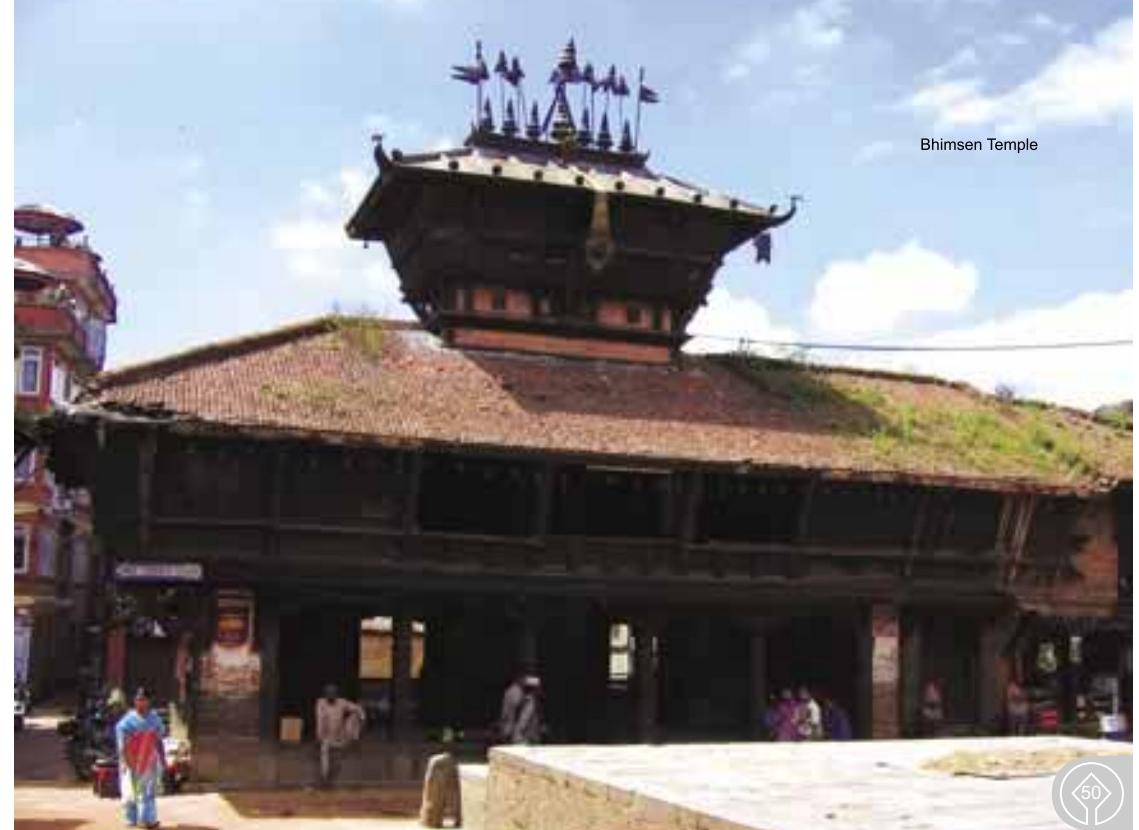




## DATTATREYA SQUARE

**A** group of men are chatting under the Bhimsen Temple and an old man straddles his walking stick and stares across the square with a distant look in his eyes. The ground floor of the Bhimsen Temple serves as a meeting place. The main shrine rests on the upper storey and is frequented by local people. Bhimsen is the patron of merchants, which explains why he is popular among the traders.

Many years ago, as legend has it, a young boy used to visit the Dattatreya temple to claim a share of the food that was distributed daily to the poor. One day a couple who had come to offer prayers took note of the boy and, as they did not have children of their own, decided to give him a home. Time passed and when the boy was old enough, his father asked him to plough and tend their fields. The boy went obediently to the fields early in the morning but instead of working he took a long nap every day. This continued day after day until the fields were covered with weeds and overgrown plants. The villagers noticed the neglected farmland and



Bhimsen Temple

informed the boy's father. The old man, incensed by the boy's disobedience, threatened to punish him if the weeds were not cleared. Sensing the anger in his father's voice, he begged for mercy and promised to clear the fields immediately. The next morning the old man went to inspect his property and was taken aback. The weeds had disappeared without a trace, the crops were well cared for and flourishing. The old man suspected that this was the work of no ordinary mortal and returned home to beg the boy to reveal himself. It was only then that the boy admitted that he was the God Bhimsen. The old man was transfigured with joy and asked him to stay on in his house. Bhimsen agreed to remain only if a house was built solely for him. The

house was built and the God resides there to this day.

An alternative account in the great Hindu epic the Mahabharata states that Bhimsen was one of the five Pandava brothers, who were at loggerheads with their cousins, the Kauravas. One day, Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas challenged the Pandavas to a game of dice. Aided by his scheming uncle, Duryodhana won all the bets. The five Pandava brothers lost their kingdom, personal possessions and finally their wife Draupadi. Ecstatic at his success and intent on insulting the Pandavas, Duryodhana called upon his brother Dushashana and ordered him to humiliate Draupadi. Dushashana thus dragged her by the hair and started to

## Mahabharata

The Mahabharata, together with the Ramayana, is one of the major historic epics in Indian culture and brings together a series of stories involving a large number of deities and mythological figures, which are still very much present in Nepali culture.

The Mahabharata is an epic poem completed between 300 BC and 500 AD that was originally concerned with a secular tale. With its 100,000 verses it is considered the longest epic poem in the world. The story concerns a never-ending battle between two royal clans, the Pandava and Kaurava families. The numerous versions vary geographically and in the way that they interpret the main events. **Krishna**, one of the most popular Hindu gods, is introduced through the epic as an incarnation of Vishnu. The climax of the poem, is called the **Bhagvadgita**, or celestial song, delivered by one of the incarnations of Krishna. In the Bhagvadgita, Krishna explains about the immortality of the soul and that all activity can be considered a sacrifice as long as it is undertaken in a spirit of complete detachment. To most Hindus this sermon is their main religious text.

undress her in public. Draupadi prayed to the Gods who rescued her. Bhimsen swore that he would not rest till he had killed Duryodhana. The rivalry among the cousins eventually led to the battlefield, where Bhimsen killed Duryodhana and Draupadi washed her hair with his blood.

Standing opposite the Bhimsen Temple and across the square are two famous wrestlers guarding the entrance to the **Dattatreya Temple**. Like Bhimsen, these two wrestlers, Jayamala and Phatta, were known for their strength and stamina. Wrestling was very popular in the early days of Bhaktapur

Dattatreya Temple



Dattatreya Temple



and men frequently challenged each other to prove their supremacy. A famous wrestler, who had never been defeated and was known far and wide, lived in a nearby village. One day, while displaying his skills in public, a little boy told him that strong as he was, he was no match for his father. The proud wrestler was enraged at this remark and challenged the boy's father to a match. The two men met for the showdown in the market square. They grappled and pulled and rolled till they were covered in dust. The crowd agreed that they were evenly matched; strength for strength and skill for skill. The wrestling was so vigorous that several buildings surrounding them collapsed and the fight continued for forty days and forty nights. Eventually, the King had to intervene. He declared the match a draw and appointed the wrestlers as guards to the Dattatreya Temple.

Today, only the statues of the wrestlers remain and small children and beggars linger around the temple. It was originally built as a rest house for pilgrims. Like the Kasthamandapa in Kathmandu, people believe that Dattatreya was carved out of the wood of a single tree. The temple is three storeys high and is dedicated to a sage who is believed to be the incarnation of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. There is a stone pillar with a metal conch (sankhu) on top, towards the right of the entrance and a left pillar supporting Vishnu's Discus (chakra). In front of the temple stands an image of Garuda. The temple is frequented by Hindus and Newars and musicians gather here to play their instruments during the evenings.

The Dattatreya Square is surrounded by seven maths (priest houses), most of which have been transformed into museums or shops. The Dathu Math serves as a woodcarving workshop. The most important among the seven priest's houses is the **Pujari Math** which was the largest and most famous religious institution in Bhaktapur in the 16th century. During those days, Pujari Math was known for the production of herbal medicines and people travelled from far and wide to receive instruction in the art of medicine. Today, the top floor of the math is also a woodcarving museum and the building itself is famous for the virtuously carved '**Peacock Window**' which is found on the eastern wing, in the small street filled with carving and paper shops. The rare masterpiece in wood dates back to the early 15th century and is comprised of fine lattice work with an intricately carved peacock at its center.

#### Math

The Hindu Priest House or Math is organized in the same way as a regular house. It is generally three stories high and can only be distinguished from the neighbouring houses by its more lavish use of decorative woodcarving and other ornaments. Whereas Buddhist Viharas (monasteries) are composed around a courtyard, and a palace even around various courtyards, a math is composed of different houses (ghar).

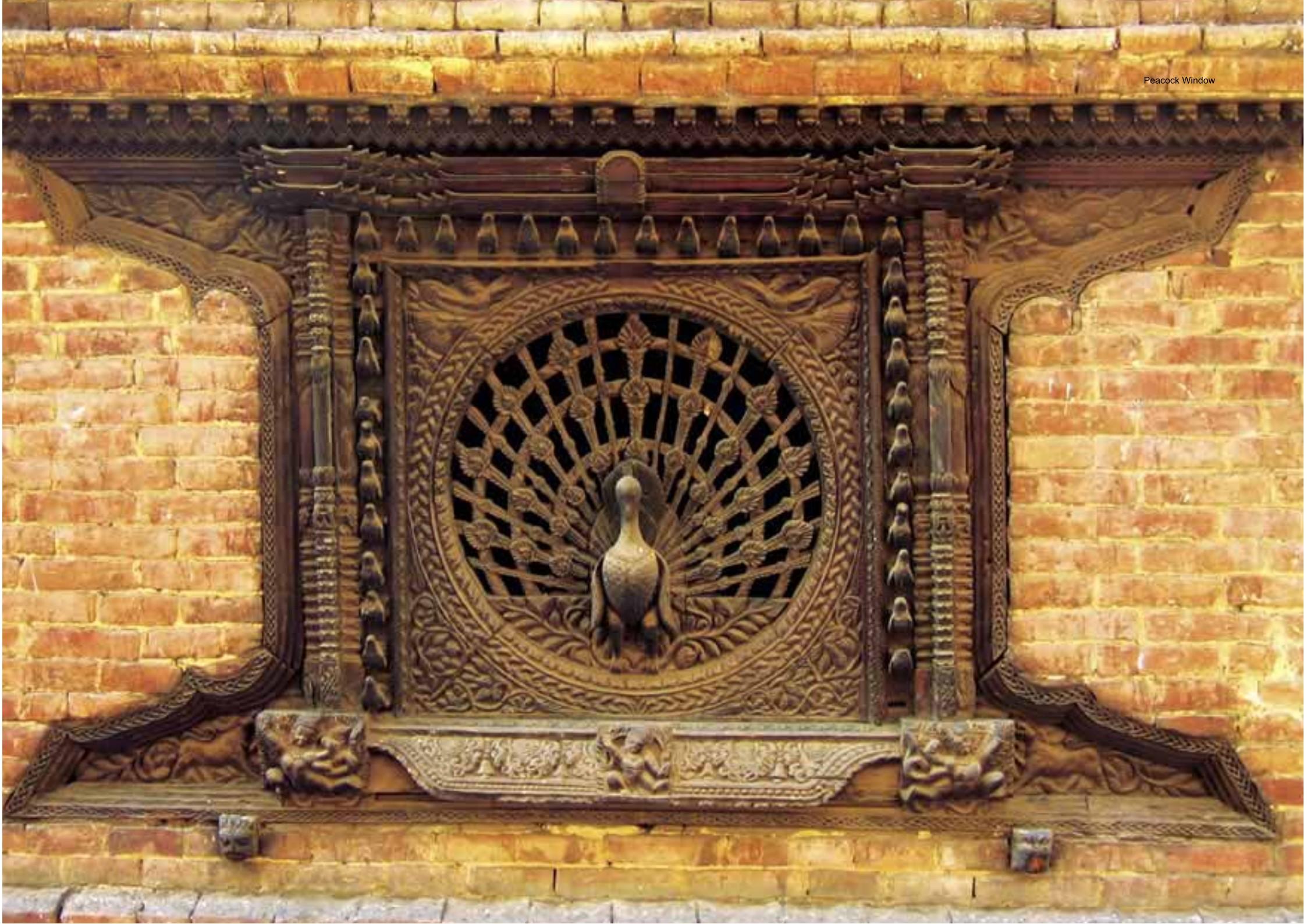
A math functions as a regular house and accommodates the priest and his family and usually other priests and a group of students.

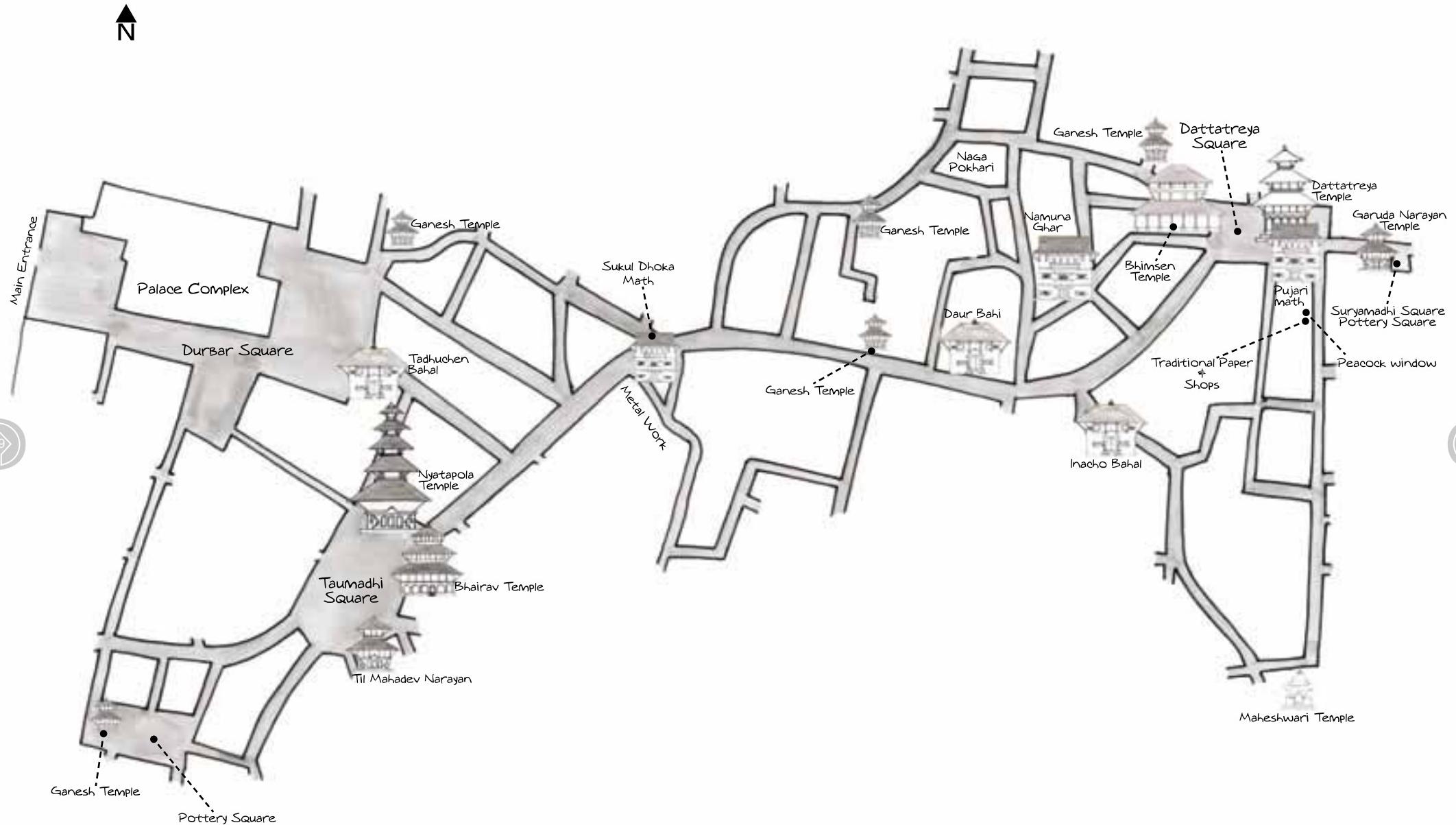
**Key**

- 1. Main Gate
- 2. Jagannath Temple
- 3. Kedarnath Temple
- 4. Badrinath Temple
- 5. Krishna Mandir
- 6. Durga Temple
- 7. Heritage Unit
- 8. National Art Gallery
- 9. Malati Chowk
- 10. Mul Chowk + Taleju
- 11. Sadashiv Bhairav Chowk
- 12. Naga Pokhari
- 13. Sattal
- 14. Batsala Devi Temple
- 15. Bhupatindra Malla Pillar
- 16. Taleju Bell
- 17. Pashupati Temple
- 18. Dhunge Dhara
- 19. Chyasalin Mandapa
- 20. 55 Windows Palace
- 21. Bhagwati Temple
- 22. Stone lions + Hari Shankar Temple
- 23. Fasidega Temple
- 24. Ganesh Shrine



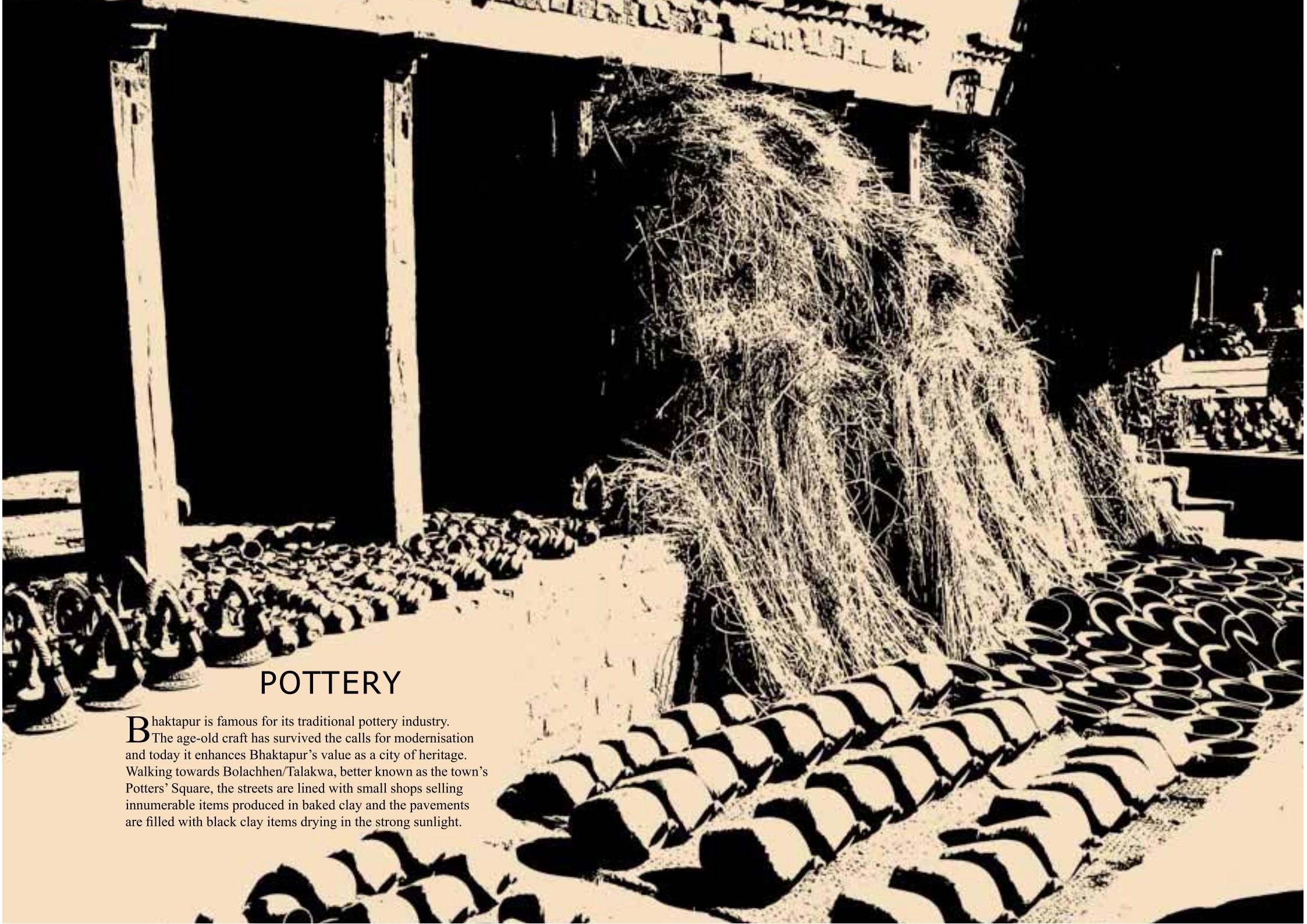
Peacock Window





## POTTERY

Bhaktapur is famous for its traditional pottery industry. The age-old craft has survived the calls for modernisation and today it enhances Bhaktapur's value as a city of heritage. Walking towards Bolachhen/Talakwa, better known as the town's Potters' Square, the streets are lined with small shops selling innumerable items produced in baked clay and the pavements are filled with black clay items drying in the strong sunlight.





With the exception of the planting and harvesting season, the potters of Bhaktapur are always busy shaping the natural clay into any imaginable shape. The craftsmen have passed this technique down from generation to generation and even today, the majority uses traditional techniques, with only a few adopting the motorised wheel. The others continue to turn the wheel with a large stick before kneeling down to work the wet clay, just as their forefathers did.

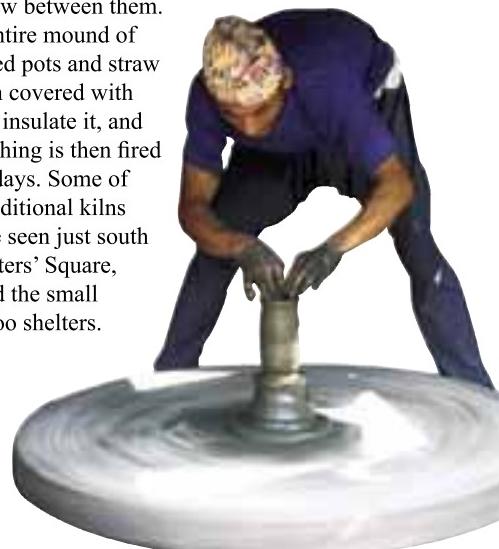
Walking around Potters' Square, it becomes clear that the piggy bank must be the most popular item produced here. In less visited areas, such as Suryamadhi (south of Dattareya Square), potters are occupied making the traditional bowls for the famous local curd, 'JuJu Dhaao' (see page 12). Other frequently produced items are the sanli or small vessels for drinking

raksi (local alcohol). Larger objects in clay are generally made in Thimi, a village south of Bhaktapur.

Although the availability of imported kitchenware has certainly harmed the pottery market, earthenware is still largely in use. A curd shop can easily use up to 1000 curd pots a month. The earthen pots have the same effect on curd as oak casks have on wine, contributing to the specific taste and they cannot be reused or replaced by any other material. In this way, a certain market is assured for the potters of Bhaktapur. Another important market is created by some of the major festivals. Tihar, the festival of light, creates an incredible demand for pottery as small earthen oil lamps are used to light entire cities on the day of Laxmi Puja.

#### Production Process:

1. Clays of different qualities are mixed, either with a machine or with bare feet.
2. The mixed clay can be used immediately. In order to prevent it from drying out, the clay is piled up, water is added and it is pressed with the feet. The piles are then covered with plastic and can be seen on the south side of Potters' Square under a bamboo shelter.
3. Before putting the clay on the potters' wheel, it is kneaded with the hands in order to provide the necessary flexibility. You can also see the potters taking small stones and other irregularities out of the clay.
4. The clay is then put in the middle of the wheel and the wheel is rotated with a wooden stick (or nowadays more and more by a motor).
5. The potters kneel besides the wheel and they mould the clay into shape with their hands.
6. The item is then taken off the wheel and left to dry in the sunlight for 2-3 days.
7. After having dried, the products are taken to a kiln, where items are piled up with layers of straw between them. The entire mound of un-fired pots and straw is then covered with ash to insulate it, and everything is then fired for 3 days. Some of the traditional kilns can be seen just south of Potters' Square, behind the small bamboo shelters.







## NEWARI SARI

When walking around in Bhaktapur, the local dress soon draws the attention of visitors. Women dressed in black and red can be seen going about their daily chores or chatting together on one of the many patti (covered platforms). Bhaktapur has to a large extent remained a Newar settlement and this is represented in the dress of its people. In Newari dialect the traditional saris are called Hakku Patashi, which can be translated as "black sari". True to its name, a Hakku Patashi is a simple black sari with a distinct red border.



The Hakku Patashi is made on a traditional machine called a tna: it spins cotton into cloth and is used by small scale cottage industries in Nepal. Women wear the distinctive outfit on a day-to-day basis in traditional households, but it is particularly popular in Bhaktapur. They are mandatory wear for cultural events which might include ceremonies to worship local deities and major Hindu festivals such as Dasain. It is also worn by Jyapu (farming) women whilst planting rice. It is common to see this activity during the ceremonial rice planting period that is determined by the lunar calendar, and usually falls at the end of June. The Hakku Patashi is worn with a white patuko, a lengthy waist band also made of cotton, a blouse and large gold earrings. The charm of the clothing lies more in the sense of culture and



tradition bound to it than in the cloth itself. An image of a Newar girl in a Hakku Patashi serving guests is also a popular symbol of the lavishness that is Newar culture. Its popularity and symbolism have been adopted in many restaurants serving Newari cuisine, where the female attendants often dress in the traditional saris.



## Woodcarving

Nepali woodcarving has been one of the country's primary art forms for over a millennium. Highly developed examples from as early as 1396 suggest many centuries of development prior to that date, and are still visible in the Kathmandu Valley (at the temple of Indresvara Mahadeva in Panauti). Even the name 'Kathmandu' derives from the Sankrit for wood (kastha) and temple/rest house (mandapa). Contemporary 7th century accounts from a Chinese pilgrim named Hsuan Tsang refer to the Nepali carving skills and their 'houses made of carved wood'.

Carving continues to play an important role in the traditional constructions being built in the valley today.

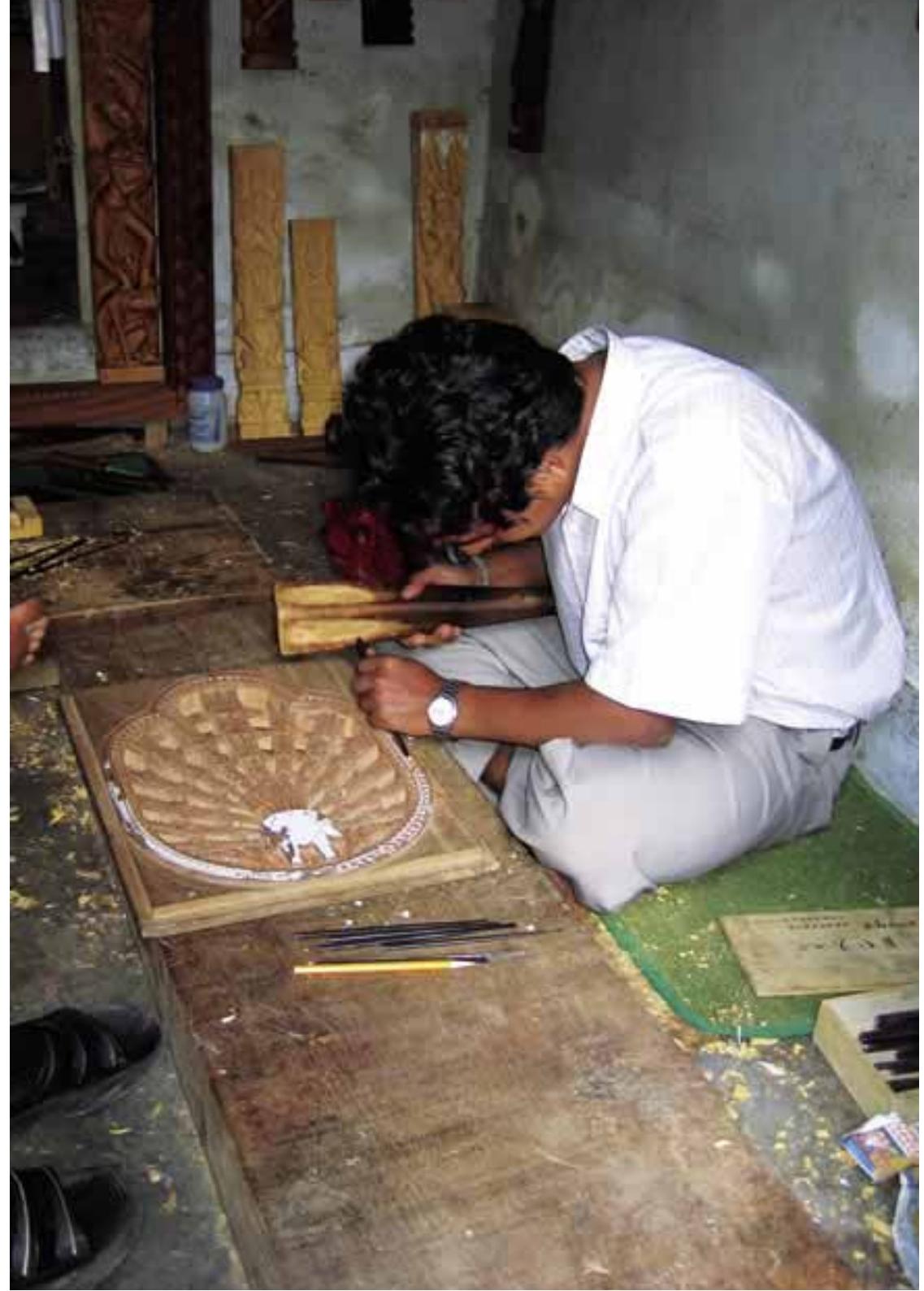
Whilst there are examples of free-standing wooden sculpture, the most representative use of finely carved woodwork can be found in structural elements of the buildings and temples themselves. The main bodies of these buildings are usually composed of brickwork and stone, but the wooden doors, windows, cornices, lintels, struts and pillars are bursting with life and spiritual meaning.

Traditionally woodcarving was confined to Newari artisans or 'Shilpkars' from Patan. Their skills were passed down through generations, and domestic homes often housed workshops on the ground floor. The art form, like many others, flourished in the Malla period (1482-1768). Much as rival cities in Europe competed to build ever higher gothic cathedrals, the Kings of the Kathmandu Valley vied to outdo each other with the grandeur of their city-states. The Durbar Squares of Patan, Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, with their abundant examples of richly carved temples, monasteries and maths (priests' houses) bear testimony to the importance given to carving during this period. Woodcarving continued to be revered by the Shah dynasty and continued its popularity until the Rana Administration came into effect in 1846. With their artistic bias towards the stuccoed facades of the western world, the Rana elite preferred to eschew the building techniques of their ancestors in favour of monumental 'modern' buildings. Ironically, it has partly been the western world that has promoted the re-birth of the

use of carving in architecture. As tourists have flooded into the country since the 1950's, it was the Malla and Shah buildings and temples that captured their imagination and came to symbolise the Kingdom. Subsequently, they wished to take souvenirs of their visit, which kick-started the industry creating replica windows and doors and revived the ailing skills. The recent architectural trend towards building traditional buildings with modern conveniences has helped promote the use of carving on the facades, and in the interiors.

Today, carvers use a very hardwearing and difficult to handle timber known locally as Sal (*Shorea robusta*) for structural elements such as doors, pillars and windows. Known also as Ironwood or Dhumsi (stong as a tiger) in Newari, Sal is the preferred wood used for railway sleepers in India. It is said that Sal can survive up to 1,000 years submerged in water. Other timber much in use is Sisso (*Dalbergia sisso*), with its distinctive grain and rich colour and Chaap (*Mechelia champaca*), both of which are easier to carve than Sal. The vast majority of this raw material is forested in the southern Terai region. When selecting timber it is important to consider the grain of the wood.

Craftsmen work directly onto seasoned wood after drawing the required design onto its surface. Once the basic shape has been created the craftsman swaps instruments and uses finer tools to render the image and add details.

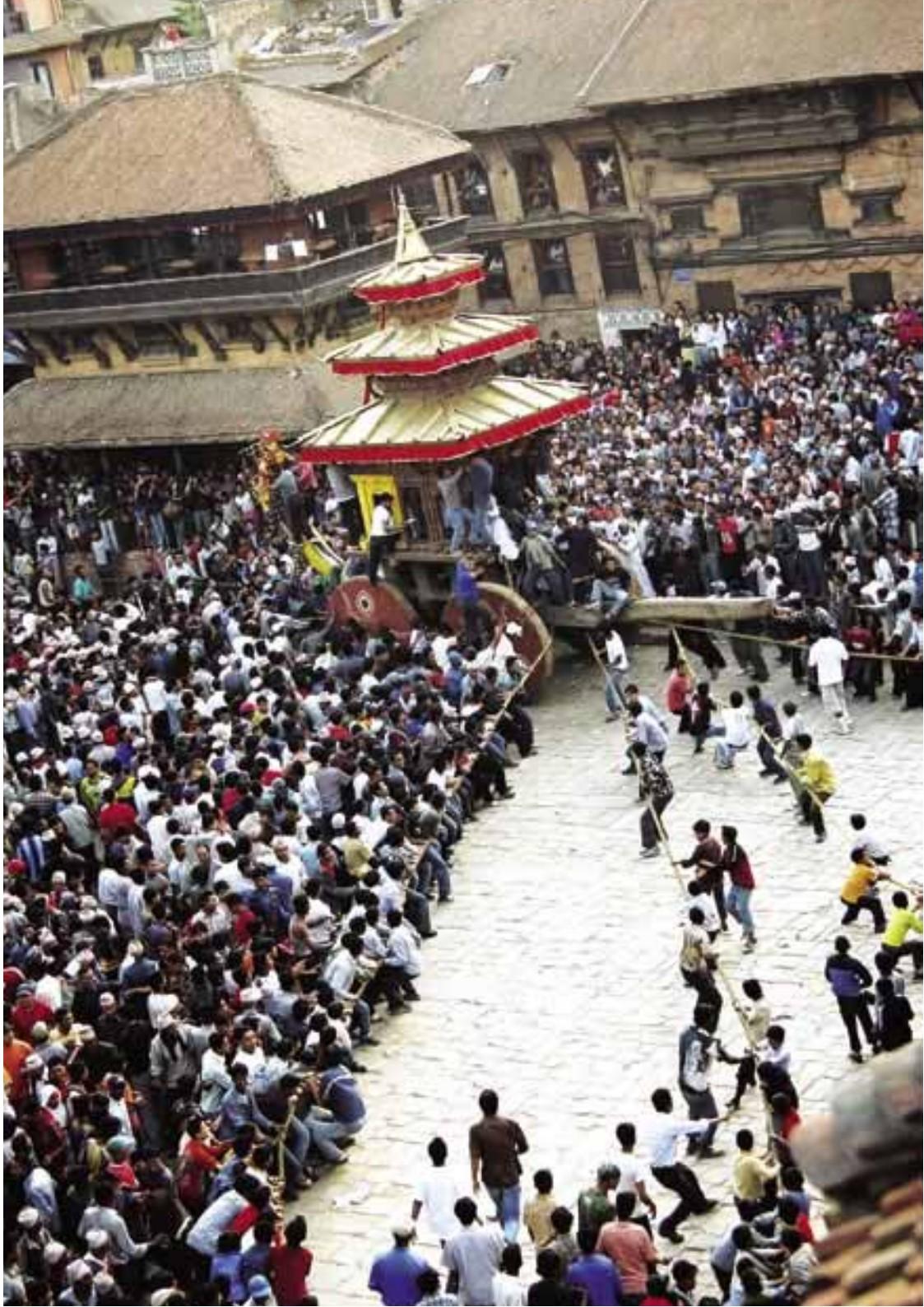


# FESTIVALS

by Shanti Mishra

Nepal is known to foreigners as a land of fascinating festivals, and rightly so as the Nepalese celebrate more festivals than there are days in a year. They are celebrated according to the lunar calendar and therefore do not occur on the same date from year to year and every full moon day (the 15th day of the lunar month) has special significance. The lifestyle of the Nepali people is uniquely interwoven with religious culture and rituals and entertainment is provided by the numerous festivals. They are not merely spectacles but a celebration of the glorious cultural heritage. Festivals unite people of diverse cultural backgrounds and faiths into one nation. Besides Gods and Goddesses, the worshipping during some festivals is in honour of the earth, sun, moon, parents, brothers, cows, snakes, dogs, rivers, plants, tools, weapons- practically everything!





Some festivals such as Dasain and Tihar are celebrated throughout the country. Some are celebrated only in the cities. These include Indra Jatra in Kathmandu, Rato Machhendranath jatra in Patan and Bisket Jatra in Bhaktapur. Some are celebrated only in one village; Harishankar jatra in Pharping, Adinath jatra in Chobhar and Maha-Laxmi jatra in Thankot. The colorful festivals which are centered in the Bhaktapur Durbar Square are:

Name	Month of Celebration
Bisket jatra	Baisakh (Apr/May)
Saaparu Gai jatra	Shrawan (Jul/Aug)
Pulukisi and Mupatra	Bhadra (Aug/Sep)
Nav Durga Dance	Asoj – Asar (Sep/June)
Sakimana Punhi	Kartik (Oct/Nov)

#### **Bisket jatra**

(Baisakh – April/May)

Bisket jatra is one of the most popular, colorful and spectacular festivals of Bhaktapur. The tradition-loving people of Bhaktapur celebrate the Bisket with great pomp and grandeur for nine days in a row by pulling a chariot after installing the God Bhairab and the Goddess Bhadrakali inside it. The decorated chariots are located at the Taumadhi Square in front of the famous Nyatapola temple. On the fourth day of the festival, the

ceremonial Yoshi (wooden pole) with two long banners representing snake demons, is raised at Yoshi Khel (open field) east of Bhaktapur in the presence of Bhairab and Bhadrakali, who are enshrined in the chariot. It is very noisy and crowded but worthwhile to see the celebration. When the chariot reaches the city center, a tug-of-war between the inhabitants of the upper and lower town takes place. The winners of the tug-of-war are considered blessed with good fortune for the coming year. The following day men and women of all ages witness the pulling down of the Yoshi. Finally the Yoshi crashes to the ground and marks the victory over evil. The closing ceremony of Bisket is observed on the 9th day by performing different rituals to bring the chariots of Bhairav and Bhadrakali back to where they began.

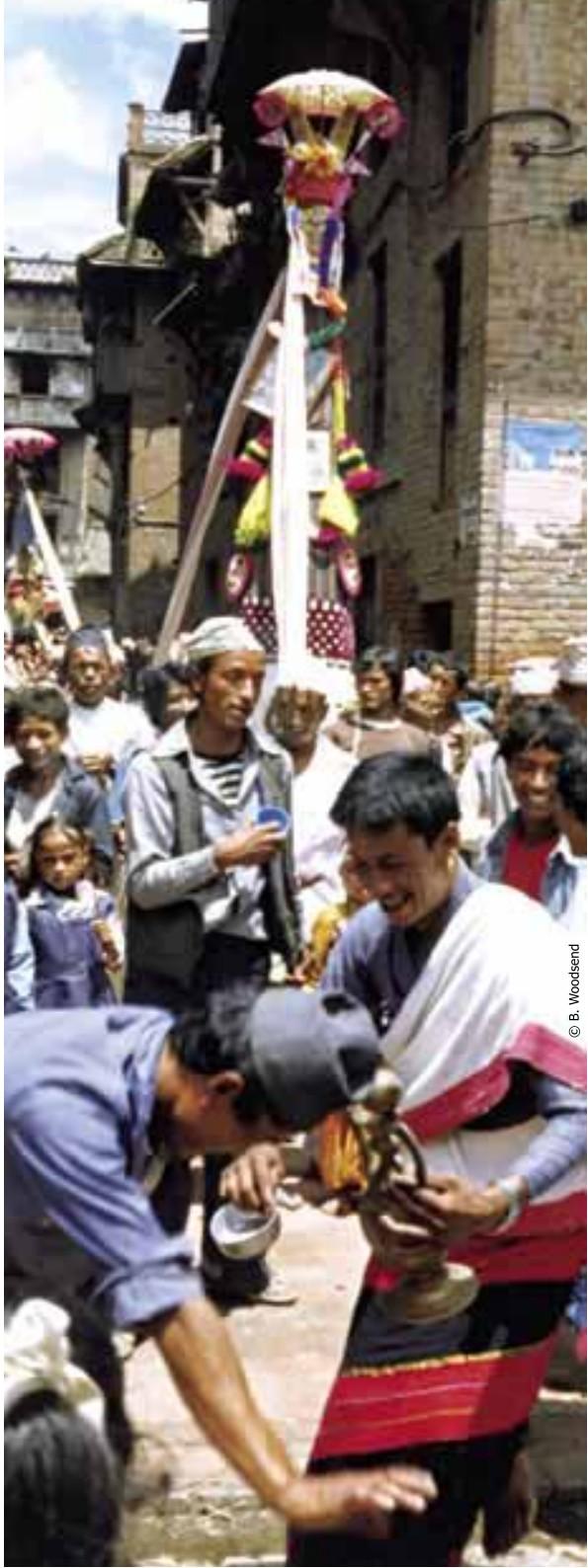
#### **Saaparu Gai jatra**

(Shrawan/July-August)

This festival starts on Janai Purnima (full moon), a day earlier than the Gai jatra celebrations in the rest of the valley, and it lasts nine days. The main festival starts on the second day, when the procession of cows is taken along the traditional routes.







In Bhaktapur, cows are represented in many different ways: some carry upside down doko (bamboo basket) painted like cows, others tahase (tall bamboo stands wrapped with cloth) decorated with beautiful clothes and pictures of deceased relatives and statues of cows. The tahase are used to represent adults who have passed away that year, and the doko represent children. Most are accompanied by stick dancers and buffoons with a ghintanghisi band (traditional cow festival band). At the end, the procession passes through the Durbar Square and circulates the statue of King Bhupatindra Malla. It occurs at around 5:30 pm and is a unique event to watch.

#### Pulukisi and Mupatra

(Bhadra/August-September)

This festival is held in Bhaktapur during the time of Indra jatra which differs from the timing of the Kathmandu festival of the same name. The beautiful wooden and metal images of the god Indra are displayed in different localities on the day of Bhadra Purnima (full moon). The Mupatra – a demon dressed in a green Malla era costume- is accompanied by two other demons. All three appear from the Shiva temple situated adjacent to the Bhaktapur Durbar Dhoka (gate) and travel around Bhaktapur city followed by a procession. On his way the Mupatra stops before each of Indra's images and jumps up and down brandishing his sword. On the same day, the Pulukisi (Indra's elephant) is accompanied by an attractive procession and they perform a peculiar dance from Lakulachhe Tole near the Nyatapola Temple around the city. According to the folklore, Mupatra and

Pulukisi are not supposed to meet each other - if they meet they will fight. This fascinating jatra usually occurs late in the evening.

#### Nava Durga Dance

(Asoj or Asar/September or June)

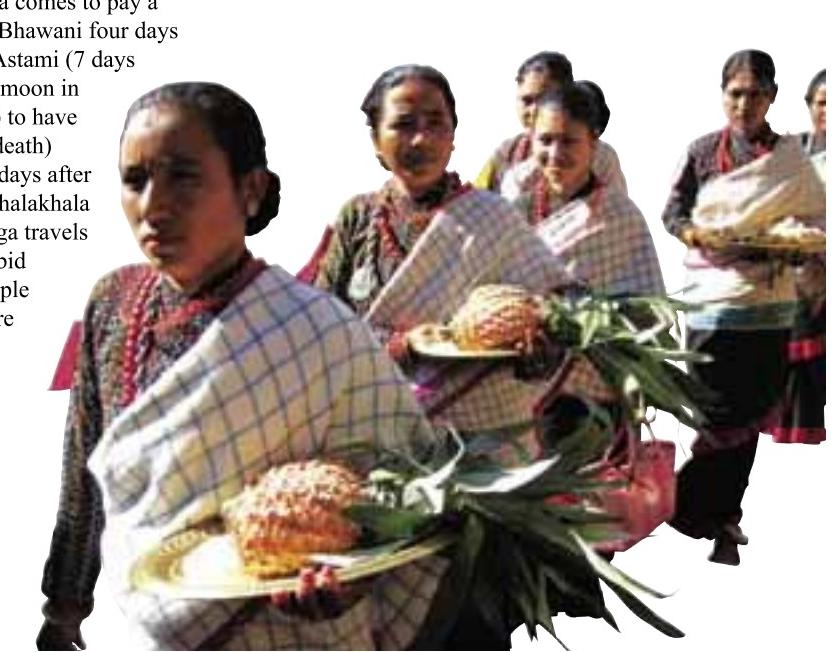
Bhaktapur is famous for its classic Nava Durga dance dedicated to Durga, the goddess of power. The dances are performed with beautiful masks. They take place in different localities including three different corners of the Durbar Square starting on the Navami day of Dasain and running until Bhalastami, Asar. The Taleju Bhawani has strong ties with Nava Durga, who attains her tantric powers from the goddess. After bestowing her with tantric powers, the goddess Taleju leads the Nava Durga on a grand procession through historic streets on Dashami (the 10th day of Dasain). On Navami (9th day of Dasain) the new colourful Nava Durga Masks are displayed in Yachhe Tole, east of Durbar Square. According to tantric rituals, Nava Durga comes to pay a last visit to Taleju Bhawani four days before Bhalakhali Astami (7 days before the waxing moon in the month of Asar) to have Sijaa (rice before death) - last dinner. Four days after having Sijaa, on Bhalakhala Astami, Nava Durga travels around the city to bid farewell to the people of Bhaktapur before

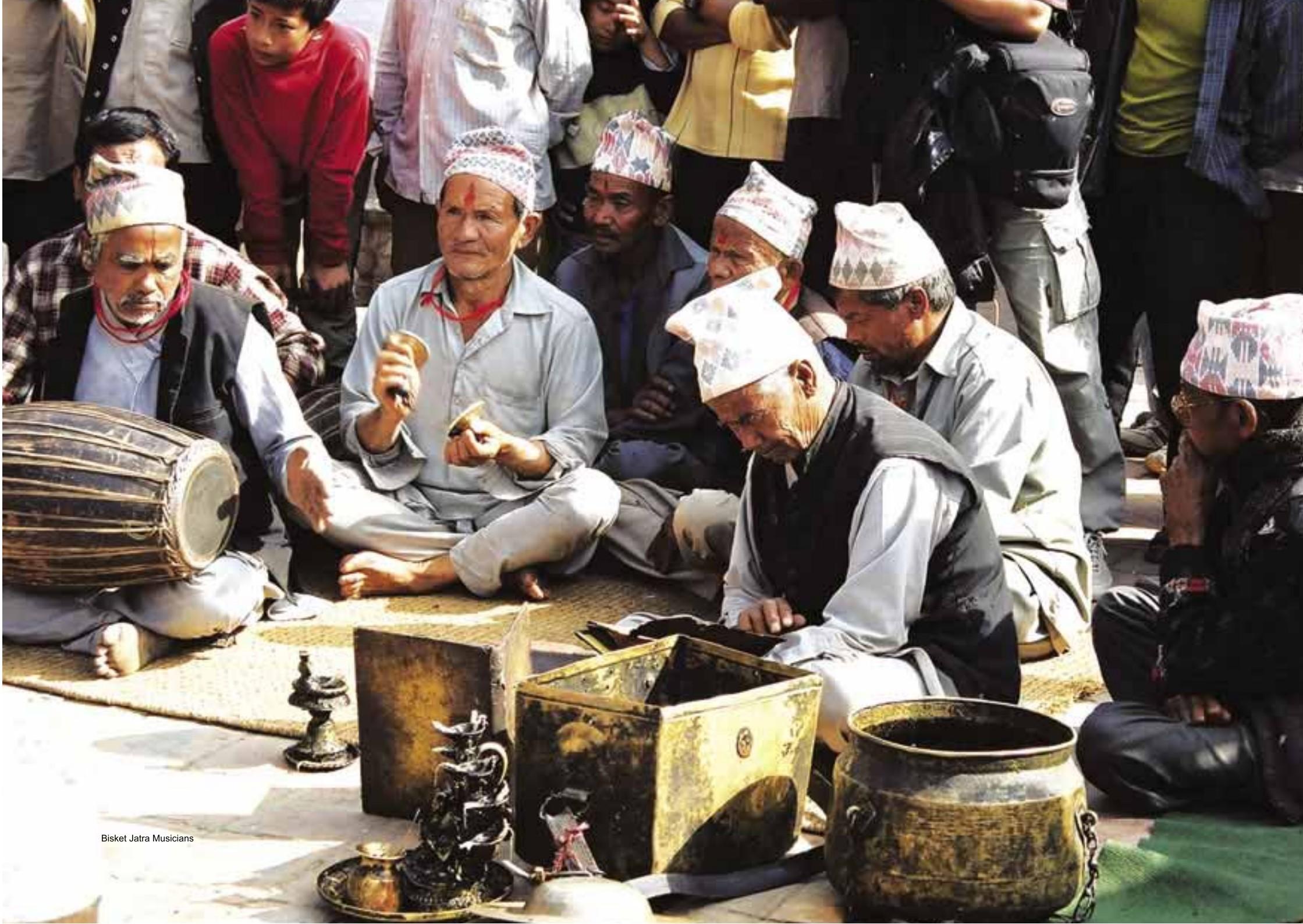
they cremate the colourful masks at the Brahmayani Ghat (pier) at midnight. The masks are cremated according to tantric rituals, and outsiders are not allowed to watch. On that day, the atmosphere within the city is sad and mournful.

#### Sakimana Punhi

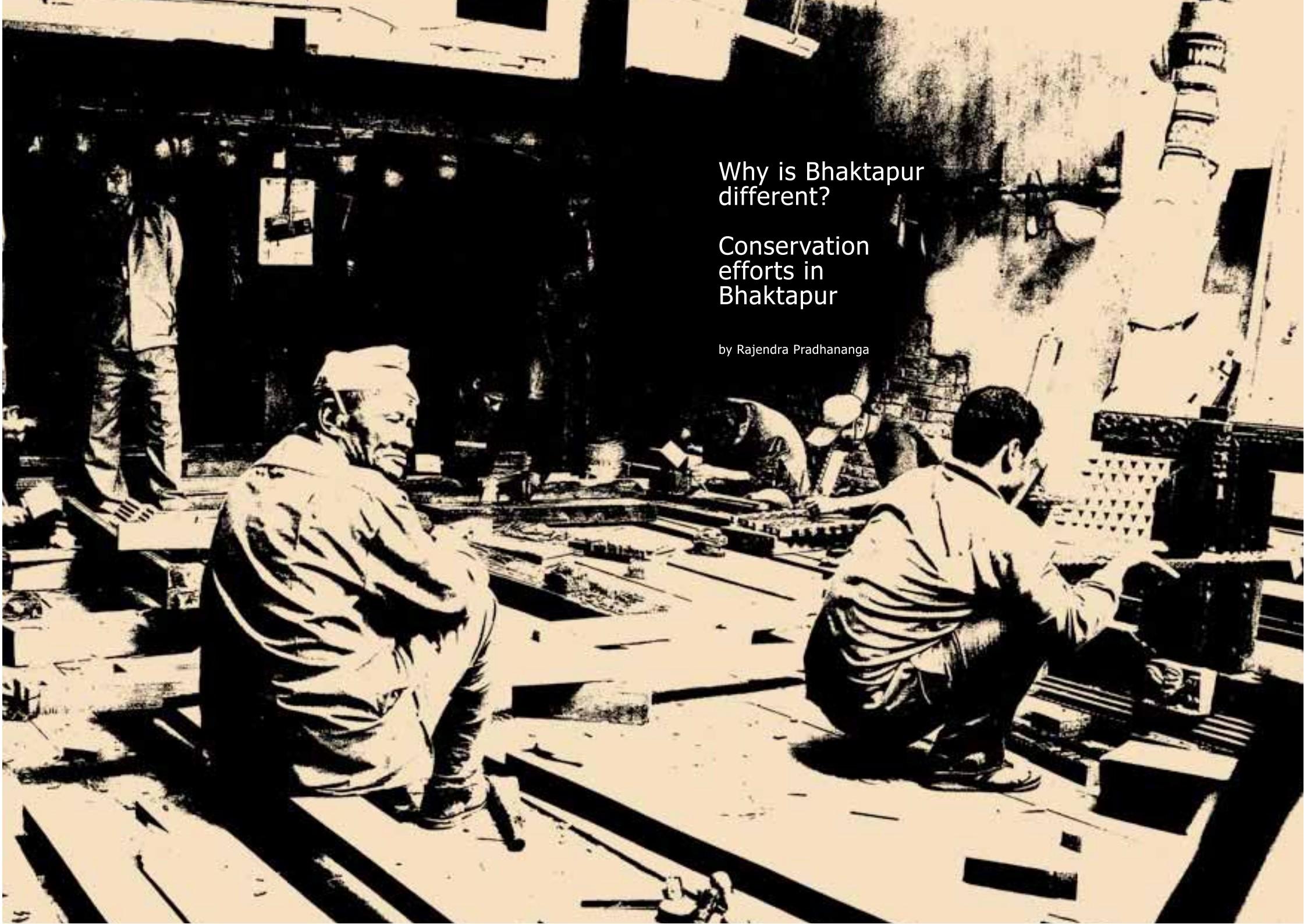
(Kartik/October-November)

This festival is celebrated on Sakimana Punhi (full moon of Kartik). Artistic pictures of temples are made using colourful grains and beans on a background of wheat. The images are laid out in front of temples in different localities. Among these, the most spectacular are the large pictures of Taumadhi and Dattatreya Square. The creations look remarkably like the originals.





Bisket Jatra Musicians



Why is Bhaktapur  
different?

Conservation  
efforts in  
Bhaktapur

by Rajendra Pradhananga



**B**haktapur, the ancient city, also known as the “City of Culture and Living Heritage” is world renowned for its elegant art, fabulous culture and indigenous lifestyle. The city is an open museum strewn with unique palaces, temples and monasteries and is admired for its delicate artwork in wood, metal and stone. However, the city is also home to over 80,000 people. Many visitors note how the people of Bhaktapur have managed to conserve the heart of their city so effectively, and wonder what makes it different to other settlements in Nepal. The answer is a long running collaboration of dedicated partners, and the will of the people.

On the basis of the bilateral cooperation between the Government of Nepal and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany the Bhaktapur Development Project (BDP) was initiated in 1974 with the aim to raise the living conditions of the Bhaktapurians and to improve their economic condition. The project, which started in 1974 and carried on until July 1986 with follow up to 1991, was prepared to acquire maximum public participation and to provide responsibility to various offices for the implementation of the programmes. Completed programmes were handed over to the concerned local offices to allow for sustainability. In the beginning, activities were focused mainly on restoration of temples and other historic monuments, the preparation of a Conservation Master Plan and studies of infrastructure works. With the completion of detailed studies the priority was moved to other works such as water supply, sewerage,

pavements, solid waste management and economic promotion.

As a result of these efforts the face of the city changed. Before the BDP Bhaktapur was known as one of the dirtiest cities in Nepal; the BDP transformed it into one of the cleanest. Previously, both tourists and the Nepalese people avoided visiting but since completion of the project visitor numbers have increased dramatically. The Tourist Service fee was introduced to provide a source of income for the Municipality. Now the Fee provides major income for the Municipality, comprising almost 70% of their total budget. With the collected funds the Municipality has restored more than 450 monuments. Some, such as the five storied Bhairav temple and the Palace of 55 Windows are major monuments, but attention is also given to small domestic shrines. Today the Bhaktapur Municipality implements an average of 60 renovation projects of varied size each year in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology and local communities.





# KINGS & RULERS OF NEPAL

## Pre-Historic 1 or Gopala Period



### Before 700 BC

The period lasted for 521 years and the dynasty had 7 Kings  
First King – Bhuktaman

## Pre-Historic 2 or Kirata Period

### c. 700 BC – 78 AD

There were 29 kings of the Kirata dynasty  
First King – Yalambar  
Last King - Gasti

Table 1. The Rulers of Licchavi Period (c. 78 - c. 879 AD)

Rulers	Approx. Reign duration
The first Licchavi king Bhaskaravarma, was followed by his descendants Bhumivarma, Chandravarma, Jayavarma, Varsavarma, Sarvavarma, Prithvi, Jestha, Hari, Kuber, Siddhi, Haridattavarma, Vasudeva...	NA
Vrsadeva	c. 400 AD
Sankaradeva	c. 425 AD
Dharmadeva	c. 450 AD
<b>Manadeva I</b>	<b>464-505 AD</b>
Mahideva	NA
Vasantadeva	506-532 AD
Manudeva	NA
Vamanadeva	538 AD
Ramadeva	545 AD
Ganadeva	560-565 AD
Gangadeva	567 AD
Bhaumagupta	c. 567-590 AD
Manadeva II	c. 575 AD
<b>Sivadeva I</b>	<b>590-604 AD</b>
<b>Amsuvarma</b>	<b>605-621 AD</b>
Udayadeva	621 AD
Dhruvadeva + Jisnugupta	624-625 AD
Bhimarjunadeva + Jisnugupta	631-633 AD
Jisnugupta	NA
Visnugupta	633 AD
Bhimarjunadeva + Visnugupta	640-641 AD
Visnugupta	NA
<b>Narendradeva</b>	<b>643-679 AD</b>
Sivadeva II	694-705 AD
Jayadeva II	713-733 AD
Manadeva III	756 AD
Baliraja	826 AD
Baladeva	847 AD
Manadeva IV	877 AD



**Table 2. The Rulers, or Probable Rulers of the Transitional or 'Dark Period' (c. 879-1200 AD)**

Rulers or Probable Rulers	Approx. Reign duration
Rudradeva	NA
Balarjunadeva	NA
Raghavadeva	879 AD
Sankaradeva I	920 AD
<b>Gunakamadeva I</b>	<b>987-990 AD</b>
Narendradeva I + Udayadeva	998 AD
Udayadeva	1004 AD
Nirbhayadeva	1005 AD
Nirbhayadeva + Rudradeva I	1008 AD
Bhojadeva	1011 AD
Rudradeva I + Bhojdeva	1012 AD
Bhojadeva + Rudradeva I + Laxmikamadeva I	1015 AD
Laxmikamadeva I	NA
Jayadeva	1024-1039 AD
Bhaskaradeva	1045-1048AD
Baladeva	1048-1060 AD
Pradyumnakamadeva	1060-1066 AD
Nagarjunadeva	1066-1069 AD
Sankaradeva II	1069-1083 AD
Vamadeva	1083-1085 AD
Harsadeva	1085-1099 AD
Simhadeva	1099-1122 AD
Sivadeva	1099-1126 AD
Indradeva	1126-1137 AD
Manadeva	1137-1140 AD
Narendradeva II	1140-1146 AD
Anandadeva I	1147-1166 AD
Rudradeva II	1167-1174 AD
Amritadeva	1174-1178 AD
Somesvaradeva	1178-1183 AD
Gunakamadeva II	1185-1195 AD
Laxmikamadeva II	1192-1197 AD
Vijayakamadeva	1192-1200 AD

**Table 3. The Rulers of Early Malla Period (1200-1482 AD)**

Rulers	Approx. Reign duration
Arideva Malla I	1200-1216 AD
Abhaya Malla	1216-1255 AD
Ranasuradeva	c. 1221 AD
Jayadeva	1256-1258 AD
Bhimadeva	1258-1271 AD
Sinha Malla	1271-1274 AD
Ananta Malla	1274-1307 AD
Ananadadeva II	1308-1320 AD
Ari Malla II	1320-1344 AD
Rajadeva	1347-1361 AD
Arjunadeva	1361-1381 AD
<b>Sthiti Malla (Jayasthiti Malla)</b>	<b>1382-1395 AD</b>
Dharma Malla	1396-1408 AD
Jyotir Malla	1408-1428 AD
<b>Yaksha Malla</b>	<b>1428-1482 AD</b>

After Yaksha Malla, his sons established different independent kingdoms in Kathmandu (Kantipur), Bhaktapur (Bhadgaun) and Lalitpur (Patan). In time, the rivalry between these brotherhoods led to fragmentation and poor rule in the country as well as the greatest competitive building periods.

**Table 4. The Rulers of the Independent Kingdom of Bhaktapur (Bhadgaun)  
(1482-1769 AD)**

Malla Rulers	Approx. Reign duration
Raya, Ratna, Rana, Bhima	1482-1504 AD
Vira	1504 AD
Bhuvana	1505-1519 AD
Rana, Vira, Jita	1519-1522 AD
Rana, Bhima, Vira, Jita	1522-1523 AD
Prana alone, with Jita, or with Jita & Vira	1524-1548 AD
Viswa	1548-1560 AD
Trailokya alone, with Tribhuvana, or with Tribhuvan & Gangadevi	1561-1613 AD
Jagajjyotir	1614-1637 AD
Naresa	1637-1643 AD
Jagatprakasa	1643-1672 AD
Jitamitra alone or with Ugra	1673-1696 AD
<b>Bhupatindra</b>	<b>1696-1722 AD</b>
Ranajit	1722-1769 AD

**Table 5. The Rulers of the Independent Kingdom of Kathmandu (Kantipur)  
(1482-1768 AD)**

Malla Rulers	Approx. Reign duration
Ratna alone or with Ari	1484-1520 AD
Surya	1520-1529 AD
Amara (Narendra)	1529-1560 AD
Mahendra	1560-1574 AD
Sadasiva	1575-1581 AD
Sivasimha (with Ranajitsimha)	1578-1619 AD
<b>Laxminarasimha</b>	<b>1619-1641 AD</b>
<b>Pratapa</b>	<b>1641-1674 AD</b>
Nripendra	1674-1680 AD
Parthivendra	1680-1687 AD
<b>Bhupalendra</b>	<b>1687-1700 AD</b>
Bhaskara (Mahindrasimha)	1700-1722 AD
Jagajjaya	1722-1734 AD
Jayaprakasa (reign interrupted by his infant son)	c. 1769 AD
Jyotiprakasa (infant son)	1746-1752 AD

**Table 6. The Rulers of the Independent Kingdom of Lalitpur (Patan)  
(1482-1768 AD)**

<b>Malla Rulers, mahapatras &amp; one Shah King</b>	<b>Approx. Reign duration</b>
Raya Malla (his brothers & nephews in varying combinations)	1482-1519 AD
Visnusimha, the pradhan mahapatra, ruling Patan independent of Malla	1536 AD
Purandarshimha, alone or with his brothers	1560-1597 AD
Malla rule reestablished through annexation by Sivasimha	1597-1619 AD
<b>Siddhinarasimha</b>	<b>1619-1661 AD</b>
<b>Srinivasa</b>	<b>1661-1684 AD</b>
Yognarendra	1684-1705 AD
Lokaprakasa	1705-1706 AD
Indra	1706-1709 AD
Mahindra	1709-1714 AD
Viranarasimha (a rival ruled briefly)	1709 AD
Riddhinarasimha	1715-1717 AD
Bhaskara (Mahindrasimha)	1717-1722 AD
Yogprakasa	1722-1729 AD
Visnu	1729-1745 AD
Rajyaprakasa	1745-1758 AD
Viswajit	1758-1760 AD
Jayaprakasa of Kathmandu	1760-1762 AD
Ranajit of Bhaktapur	1762-1763 AD
Jayaprakasa (again)	1763 AD
Dalmardana Shah from Nuwakot	1764-1765 AD
Tejnarasimha Malla	1765-1768 AD

**Table 7. The Shah Rulers of unified Nepal (1769 AD - )**

<b>Shah Rulers</b>	<b>Approx. Reign duration</b>	<b>Prime Ministers</b>	<b>Dates of Office</b>
Prithvi Narayan (1722-1775 AD)	1769-1775 AD		
Ascended to throne of Gorkha 1743 AD			
Conquered Kathmandu and Patan 1768 AD			
Conquered Bhaktapur 1769 AD			
Pratap Singh (1751-1777 AD)	1775-1777 AD		
Rana Bahadra (1775-1806 AD)	1777-1799 AD		
Abdicated 1799 AD			
Girvan Yuddha Bikram (1797-1816 AD)	1799-1816 AD	Bhimsen Thapa	1806-1837 AD
Rajendra Bikram (1813-1881 AD)	1816-1847 AD	Mathbar Singh Thapa	1843-1845 AD
Dethroned 1847 AD		Jung Bahadur Rana	1846-1856 AD
		Bam Bahadur Rana	1856-1857 AD
		Jung Bahadur Rana	1857-1877 AD
Surendra Bikram (1847-1881 AD)	1847-1881 AD	Rana Uddip Singh	1877-1885 AD
Prithvi Bir Bikram (1875-1911 AD)	1881-1911 AD	Bir Shumsher	1885-1901 AD
		Dev Shumsher	1901 AD
		Chandra Shumsher	1901-1929 AD
Tribhuvan Bir Bikram (1906-1955 AD)	1911-1955 AD	Bhim Shumsher	1929-1932 AD
		Juddha Shumsher	1932-1945 AD
		Padma Shumsher	1945-1948 AD
		Mohan Shumsher	1948-1951 AD
End of 104 years of interim Rana Period (1846-1950 AD)			
Mahendra Bir Bikram (1920-1972 AD)	1955-1972 AD		
Birendra Bir Bikram (1945-2001 AD)	1972-2001 AD		
Dipendra Bir Bikram (1971-2001 AD)	2001AD		
Gyanendra Bir Bikram	2001- 2005 AD		





For more information please contact:  
UNESCO Kathmandu  
P.O. Box 14391, Jawalakhel, Lalitpur  
Kathmandu, Nepal

Email: [kathmandu@unesco.org](mailto:kathmandu@unesco.org)

Tel: +977-1-5554-396/769  
Fax: +977-1-5554-450

[www.unesco.org/kathmandu](http://www.unesco.org/kathmandu)



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